

MAYOR OF AZTLÁN ■ WHO BROKE THE CIA? ■ OBAMA'S WILSONIANS

FEBRUARY 23, 2009

The American Conservative

How Radio Wrecks the Right

By John Derbyshire



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LIFE SENTENCE

Michael Brendan Dougherty is correct in "Life for March" (Feb. 9). The Republican Party has not delivered the goods—and they don't intend to. As long as pro-life voters support the GOP, they can expect no action. It is my belief that none of the Republican-appointed Supremes will ever consent to hear an abortion case or overturn *Roe v. Wade*—and the Democrats know it. Pro-life voters are simply a source of funds to be pillaged by the party every election, just as pro-choicers are reliably exploited by the Democrats.

Besides, Republicans have no problem with death—as long as it is done with a bomb and not a scalpel. Fifty million abortions—how nauseating that Americans, who yap about freedom, have destroyed more innocent lives than Hitler took in a decade of war. God have mercy.

RANDY HARRELL

Columbia, Md.

MARCHING TO VICTORY

Michael Brendan Dougherty fails to realize—and he would if he were a journalist of any quality—that the pro-life movement is getting younger by the day.

Many young people come to the March for Life filled with apathy, but their lives are changed by what they see. Dissing by the press—as you demonstrate—and defiance by lawmakers cause these kids to realize what is taking place. It sets a fire in them, and they come back, the next year and the next. They bring their friends, then their spouses, now their children with them.

Progressives are aborting and contracepting themselves out of existence and will eventually gray up and fizzle out. This gives me hope. Meanwhile, we will fight, bloodied and cold and starved.

L. FERNANDEZ

Indianapolis, Ind.

TIME FOR TRUTH

As a Palestinian-American living in California, I wanted to thank John Mearsheimer for the wonderfully written

piece ("Another War, Another Defeat," Jan. 26). One challenge proponents of real peace in the Middle East face is overcoming the "conventional wisdom" of Palestinians as aggressors and Israelis as victims. The bias has been so demoralizing that Palestinian-Americans will routinely tell you that they can be moved to tears by articles like this that simply reaffirm the humanity of the Palestinian people.

HUSNI HASAN

Via e-mail

COURAGE UNDER FIRE

I was shocked to see the Gaza massacre unfold right under our eyes and depressed when I looked for signs of condemnation in the American media and found essentially nothing. I then turned to the European media and found it to be almost worse. Sarkozy runs around like a pathetic chicken, repeating what the U.S. authorizes him to say.

Meanwhile in Gaza, after two years of blockade, with Israeli gunboats patrolling the sea and walls erected to keep them confined, the Palestinians launched a few rockets of the type we use to celebrate Fourth of July because no one listened to their call for an opening. Revolt, even in the most pathetic way, brought down the wrath of Tsahal: 20 days of bombing, 1,500 dead—including 350 kids and 100 women burnt by phosphorous and denied international aid. Schools were leveled, sewage plants and cemeteries bombed out. The bishop of Jerusalem reported on the situation: no water, no electricity, the hospital bombed. They had to amputate kids' limbs with a diesel generator and the windows of the operating room open.

In Washington, London, and Paris, nobody seemed to care. Hamas is a terrorist organization; they got what they deserved. Israel has the right to defend herself. But then there are a few courageous men like Professor John Mearsheimer.

Finally a voice—someone credible, a scholar who tells it like it is. You are not alone, professor. Many of us out here share your views. We do not speak because we are scared. We do not want to be called racist or anti-Semitic or anti-American. We have families and jobs, and we do not want to lose it all. But we know who the terrorists are, and history will know, too. Thank you.

NAME WITHHELD

New York, N.Y.

DON'T BE A HATER

How is John Mearsheimer conservative? How do you hold your magazine out to be conservative by attacking our only ally in the Middle East? This a--wipe is a complete anti-Semite and Arab terrorist apologist. Look at the animals Israel has to put up with. I'm sure you wouldn't be publishing the same thing if it was your backyards being rocketed everyday by people who don't care one ounce about life. But wait, it's Israel, so let's hold them to a completely different standard! Your magazine is a piece of crap, and you should change the name to "The American Left-Wing Liberal Rag."

MIKE BRANDWEIN

Via e-mail

EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY

"Burmese Days" (Jan. 12) by Jim Pittaway is simply superb. It is beautifully written, hard-hitting, and right on target. I say this as someone who lived through 1988 and was a political prisoner from 1994 to 2005.

KHIN ZAW WIN

Yangon, Myanmar

The American Conservative welcomes letters to the editor. Submit by e-mail to letters@amconmag.com, by fax to 703-875-3350, or by mail to 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA 22209. Please include your name, address, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit all correspondence for space and clarity.

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[ECONOMY]

OBAMA ALREADY SPENT

As we go to press, House and Senate negotiators have agreed to a moldy liberal wishlist billed as a stimulus package. After a long night of deliberations, congressional sages concluded that we must borrow or print billions because they can't think of anything better to do. Whatever the party in power, the answer is always the same: spend.

We don't yet know details of the compromise legislation, but if the Senate's version is any indication, even the most committed Keynesian will have to concede a short circuit in this shock therapy. How will \$15 billion in Pell Grants immediately stimulate the economy? It won't. Neither will \$89 billion for Medicaid or \$150 million for "producers of livestock, honeybees, and farm-raised fish" or another \$150 million for the Smithsonian, though at least we'll have somewhere pretty to wander when we're all out of work.

As the scale of the crisis grows, the president seems to be shrinking. He buzzes about on Air Force One, trying to recall fond campaign days. He begs in the op-ed pages of the *Washington Post*—"the writer is president of the United States." From the Hill to the Democratic retreat to the East Room, Obama has taken his Cassandra show on tour. The man who once floated above it all has acquired an air of desperation. It's as if even he knows that shoveling paper into the inferno won't save us, but his liberal imagination can't conceive any alternative.

[MEDIA]

WHITE LIES

If we're all post-racial now, in the Age of Obama, somebody forgot to tell the New York papers. After The American Cause issued a report showing that recently defeated Republican legislators were weak on restricting immigration or lost to



Democrats who were at least as tough, the *New York Times* ran an editorial entitled "The Nativists Are Restless." "The relentlessly harsh Republican campaign against immigrants has always hidden a streak of racist extremism," the Old Gray Lady shrieked, citing nothing to that effect in the report. Instead, the paper of broken-record mused airily about "white-supremacist views" and conjured up the ghosts of "Know-Nothings and the Klan." The *Times* neglected to mention that the report's author, Marcus Epstein, is the half-Jewish son of a Korean immigrant. Race and national origin only matter to the *Times*, it seems, when they can be used to cudgel conservatives, however inaccurately.

Then there was the Big Apple's also-ran paper, the *New York Daily News*, in whose pages columnist Dolores Prida mischaracterized Epstein's report as arguing that white voters are "more important" than Hispanics. In fact, the premise of the report was that white voters are simply "more"—a larger constituency for Republicans to tap than Hispanics who might be flattered by GOP pandering to the pro-immigration lobby. Rather ominously, Prida noted that the National Hispanic Media Coalition has asked the Federal Communications Commission to investigate "hate speech," though she deigned to allow that Epstein was guilty merely of "igno-

rant speech." She then enlightened Epstein and her readers by declaring, "There's no one American 'dominant' culture." Really? Finnish is on the same level as English in the United States? Zoroastrianism and Christianity are equally popular and have shaped U.S. history in equal measure?

The *Times* was peddling hysteria. Prida trades in the kind of ignorance of which she accuses others. But this silly episode illustrates that the liberal press is far from getting over its racial hang-ups—or admitting that mass illegal immigration is simply not in the national interest for American citizens of any color or background.

[WORLD]

BETWEEN A HAWK & A HARD PLACE

In an apparent bid for the tendentious headline-writing prize, the *London Evening Standard* contributed: "Israelis go to polls to choose between three war-mongers." The headline was modified in later editions, but the early version reflects a reality the West is increasingly awakening to: Israel is not much interested in a "peace process" or allowing Palestinians a viable state.

The attack on Gaza, viewed as greatly disproportionate if not criminal in much of the West, was very popular in Israel. One can lament this or blame it on the Pales-

tinians—as if the weaker party is responsible for the moods of the stronger—but it is foolish not to acknowledge it.

Israeli voters didn't make the worst possible choices: they held the rising ethno-fascist party Yisrael Betinu to a distant third, not giving it the surge in seats many expected. But the growth of such a party in Israel, a mainstreaming of the ethnic cleansing ideology of Meir Kahane's outlawed Kach Party, is an ominous development.

At this writing, the likelihood is that Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu will be called upon to form a coalition government. The extremist Right will probably be part of it. Meaningful negotiations toward a two-state solution will be shelved, though Israel may feign interest in diplomacy to assuage Washington, a tactic at which Netanyahu proved adept when he headed Israel in the late 1990s. The more centrist Tzipi Livni—a woman who seems to understand that Israel's survival as a democracy requires making peace the Palestinians—performed well, and her party is not far from being in a position to lead Israel. But for the moment, Israel's political majority is one that opposes one of America's most vital interests in the Middle East.

[CULTURE]

SUPER 8

The healthy arrival of the Suleman octuplets came as sunny news in bleak times. But within days, the “midwinter miracle” had shape-shifted into a “medical travesty.” No one was offering the infants free Pampers.

Their unemployed mother, a fixture at the local baby factory, already had six children by IVF and seemed unfazed about the addition of eight more—“Money is superfluous. It's just paper.” She wanted a “huge” family to salve her childhood attachment issues.

Came the backlash, swift and fierce. In a dizzying ideological shuffle, champi-

ons of reproductive choice became advocates of “regulating the fertility industry.” Those willing to toss billions into the stimulus void turned into taxpayers' best friends. And the same voices preaching that the nuclear family is passé were suddenly horrified by single motherhood.

NBC counted noses and ruefully concluded that rearing the Suleman brood will cost \$1.5 million. From Huffington Post: “The Octuplets and their Massive Carbon Footprint: 30,400 Disposable Diapers and Counting.” *A Boston Herald* columnist called the birth “a childish way to get fame.” Subtext: Any responsible person would have aborted most of the octuplets—or, even better, stopped long before at an eco-friendly pair.

By asking that six embryos be implanted (two split into twins), Nadya Suleman pushed the limits of Franken-fertility. No question about it. But that's scarcely more heartless than reducing eight struggling preemies to planet-wrecking menaces to score political points. The Huffington Poster asked, “Should we regulate family size just as we regulate carbon emissions?” For those who can't tell the difference between a child and a contaminant that sounds like an excellent idea.

[BAILOUT]

BANKERS GET LUCKY

“You can't get corporate jets, you can't go take a trip to Las Vegas or go down to the Super Bowl on the taxpayer's dime,” said President Obama.

Shouldn't that be obvious? Not if you're Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman, who called Obama's assertion that bailed-out execs shouldn't play slots with the money “outrageous.” “What's a better place than for them to come here?”

Fair point. Washington rewarded Wall Street's finest for gambling away the GDP once already. Maybe this time they'll roll sevens. ■

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[bad vibrations]

How Radio Wrecks the Right

Limbaugh and company certainly entertain. But a steady diet of ideological comfort food is no substitute for hearty intellectual fare.

By John Derbyshire

YOU CAN'T HELP BUT ADMIRE Rush Limbaugh's talent for publicity. His radio talk show is probably—reliable figures only go back to 1991—in its third decade as the number-one rated radio show in the country. And here he is in the news again, trading verbal punches with the president of the United States.

Limbaugh remarked on Jan. 16 that to the degree that Obama's program is one of state socialism, he hopes it will fail. (If only he had said the same about George W. Bush.) The president riposted at a session with congressional leaders a week later, telling them, "You can't just listen to Rush Limbaugh and get things done." Outsiders weighed in: Limbaugh should not have wished failure on a president trying to cope with a national crisis; Obama should not have stooped to insult a mere media *artiste*, the kind of task traditionally delegated to presidential subordinates while the chief stands loftily mute. Citizens picked sides and sat back to enjoy the circus.

For Limbaugh to remain a player at this level after 20-odd years bespeaks powers far beyond the ordinary. Most conservatives—even those who do not listen to his show—regard him as a good thing. His 14 million listeners are a key component of the conservative base. When he first emerged nationally, soon after the FCC dropped the Fairness Doc-

trine in 1987, conservatives for the first time in decades had something worth listening to on their radios other than country music and bland news programs read off the AP wire. In the early Clinton years, when Republicans were regrouping, Limbaugh was perhaps the most prominent conservative in the United States. *National Review* ran a cover story on him as "The Leader of the Opposition."

Limbaugh has a similarly high opinion of himself: "I know I have become the intellectual engine of the conservative movement," he told the *New York Times*. This doesn't sit well with all conservatives. Fred Barnes grumbled, "When the GOP rose in the late 1970s, it had Ronald Reagan. Now the loudest Republican voice belongs to Rush Limbaugh." Upon discovering that Limbaugh had anointed himself the successor to William F. Buckley Jr., WFB's son Christopher retorted, "Rush, I *knew* William F. Buckley, Jr. William F. Buckley, Jr. was a father of mine. Rush, you're no William F. Buckley, Jr."

The more po-faced conservative intellectuals have long winced at Limbaugh's quips, parodies, slogans, and impatience with the starched-collar respectability of the official Right. American conservatism had been a pretty staid and erudite affair pre-Limbaugh, occasional

lapses into jollification on "Firing Line" being the main public expression of conservatism's lighter side.

Now the airwaves are full of conservative chat. *Talkers* magazine's list of the top ten radio talk shows by number of weekly listeners also features Sean Hannity, Michael Savage, Glenn Beck, Laura Ingraham, and Mark Levin. Agony aunt Laura Schlessinger and financial adviser Dave Ramsey are both in the top ten too, though their conservatism is more incidental to the content of their shows.

Liberal attempts to duplicate the successes of Limbaugh and his imitators have fallen flat. Alan Colmes's late-evening radio show can be heard in most cities, and Air America is still alive somewhere—the Aleutians, perhaps—but colorful, populist, political talk radio seems to be a thing that liberals can't do.

There are many reasons to be grateful for conservative talk radio, and with a left-Democrat president and a Democratic Congress, there are good reasons to fear for its survival. Reinstatement of the Fairness Doctrine is generally perceived as the major threat, but may not in fact be necessary. Obama is known to have strong feelings about "localism," the FCC rule that requires radio and TV stations to serve the interests of their local communities as a condition of keeping their broadcast licenses. "Local

community” invariably turns out in practice to mean leftist agitator and race-guilt shakedown organizations—the kind of environment in which Obama learned his practical politics. Localism will likely be the key to unlock the door through which conservative talk radio will be expelled with a presidential boot in the rear.

With reasons for gratitude duly noted, are there some downsides to conservative talk radio? Taking the conservative project as a whole—limited government, fiscal prudence, equality under law, personal liberty, patriotism, realism abroad—has talk radio helped or hurt? All those good things are plainly off the table for the next four years at least, a prospect that conservatives can only view with anguish. Did the Limbaughs, Hannitys, Savages, and Ingrahams lead us to this sorry state of affairs?

They surely did. At the very least, by yoking themselves to the clueless George W. Bush and his free-spending administration, they helped create the great debt bubble that has now burst so spectacularly. The big names, too, were all uncritical of the decade-long (at least) efforts to “build democracy” in no-account nations with politically primitive populations. Sean Hannity called the Iraq War a “massive success,” and in January 2008 deemed the U.S. economy “phenomenal.”

Much as their blind loyalty discredited the Right, perhaps the worst effect of Limbaugh *et al.* has been their draining away of political energy from what might have been a much more worthwhile project: the fostering of a middlebrow conservatism. There is nothing wrong with lowbrow conservatism. It’s energizing and fun. What’s wrong is the impression fixed in the minds of too many Americans that conservatism is always lowbrow, an impression our enemies gleefully reinforce when the opportunity arises. Thus a liberal like E.J.

Dionne can write, “The cause of Edmund Burke, Leo Strauss, Robert Nisbet and William F. Buckley Jr. is now in the hands of Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity. ... Reason has been overwhelmed by propaganda, ideas by slogans.” Talk radio has contributed mightily to this development.

It does so by routinely descending into the *ad hominem*—Feminazis instead of feminism—and catering to reflex rather than thought. Where once conservatism had been about individualism, talk radio now rallies the mob. “Revolt against the masses?” asked Jeffrey Hart. “Limbaugh is the masses.”

In place of the permanent things, we get Happy Meal conservatism: cheap, childish, familiar. Gone are the internal tensions, the thought-provoking paradoxes, the ideological uneasiness that marked the early Right. But however much this dumbing down has damaged the conservative brand, it appeals to millions of Americans. McDonald’s profits rose 80 percent last year.

There is a lowbrow liberalism, too, but the Left hasn’t learned how to market it. Consider again the failure of liberals at the talk-radio format, with the bankruptcy of Air America always put forward as an example. Yet in fact liberals are very successful at talk radio. They are just no good at the lowbrow sort. The “Rush Limbaugh Show” may be first in those current *Talkers* magazine rankings, but second and third are National Public Radio’s “Morning Edition” and “All Things Considered,” with 13 million weekly listeners each. It is easy to mock the studied gentility, affectless voices, and reflexive liberalism of NPR, but these are very successful radio programs.

Liberals are getting rather good at talk TV, too. The key to this medium, they have discovered, is irony. *I don’t take this political stuff seriously, I assure you, but really, these damn fool Repub-*

licans... Bill Maher, Jon Stewart, and Stephen Colbert offer different styles of irony, but none leaves any shadow of doubt where his political sympathies lie. Liberals have done well to master this trick, but it depends too much on facial expressions and body language—the double-take, the arched eyebrow, the knowing smirk—to transfer to radio. It is, in any case, not quite populism, the target audience being mainly the ironic cohort—college-educated Stuff White People Like types.

If liberals can’t do populism, the converse is also true: conservatives are not much good at gentility. We don’t do affectless voices, it seems. There are genteel conservative events—I’ve been to about a million of them and have the NoDoz pharmacy receipts to prove it—but they preach to the converted. If anything, they reinforce the ghettoization of conservatism, of which talk radio’s echo chamber is the major symptom. We don’t know how to speak to that vast segment of the American middle class that lives sensibly—indeed, conservatively—wishes to be thought generous and good, finds everyday politics boring, and has a horror of strong opinions. This untapped constituency might be receptive to interesting radio programs with a conservative slant.

Even better than NPR as a listening experience is the BBC’s Radio 4. One of the few things I used to look forward to on my occasional visits to the mother country was Radio 4, which almost always had something interesting to say on the 90-minute drive from Heathrow to my hometown. One current feature is “America, Empire of Liberty,” a thumbnail history of the U.S. for British listeners. The show’s viewpoint is entirely conventional but pitched just right for a middlebrow radio audience. Why can’t conservatives do radio like that? Instead we have crude cheerleading for world-

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Tuned in to Principle

Broadcaster Clarence Manion fought liberals in both parties.

By Christopher Manion

TODAY'S MAJOR RADIO talk shows are ongoing infomercials for political parties, but it hasn't always been that way. The "Manion Forum," a national radio show founded by my father in 1954, took bipartisan aim at whoever was in power—Republican or Democrat—on the basis of solid conservative principles. Those ideals didn't change for the 25 years that the "Forum" was on the air, and they haven't changed since. In fact, the central constitutional issue that gave rise to the "Manion Forum" has played a vital role in American politics since 9/11.

It all started with the Bricker Amendment. On April 6, 1953, my father and Eisenhower's secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, squared off before the Senate Judiciary Committee over an amendment proposed by Ohio senator John Bricker. It was designed to forbid secret "executive compacts" like those FDR and Truman had made with Stalin during World War II. Bricker aimed to restore the constitutional requirement that such agreements be publicly debated as treaties and be consented to by two-thirds of the Senate.

Dulles became irate that day because Dad pointed to Dulles's own endorsement of Bricker, delivered a year earlier when Ike was still running neck and neck with Bob Taft for the GOP nomination. The Bricker Amendment was a key factor in Taft's popularity, so Dulles had to go along. "The treaty-making power is an extraordinary power, liable to abuse," Dulles had railed in April 1952, emphasizing that treaties "can cut

across the rights given to the people by their Constitutional Bill of Rights." Not so a year later.

How had my father gotten there that day? A lifelong Democrat, he had just retired from 30 years of teaching constitutional law at Notre Dame, 12 of them as dean. His landmark book, *The Key To Peace*, had sold over a million copies. This slim tome explained the indispensable relationship between God and limited government, articulated in the Declaration of Independence—themes that motivated the emergence of the Religious Right 30 years later.

Dad was an early Taft supporter, but after the tumultuous 1952 convention he agreed to lead "Democrats for Eisenhower" because Taft supported Eisenhower and Eisenhower supported Bricker. When Ike took office, he appointed Dad to chair a commission to study how to return to the states the powers that the federal government had usurped under FDR and Truman, a task taken seriously by Dad but, in short order, not by Eisenhower.

Limiting government was a major conservative goal in 1953, and so was Bricker. After World War II, public indignation had soared at the revelation of FDR's secret deal with Stalin at Yalta in early 1945. There, Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill had betrayed half of Christian Europe to Soviet domination (for 50 years, as it turned out) and laid the groundwork for the creation of the United Nations.

Fast forward 50 years: in 2003, President George W. Bush invaded Iraq, authorized not by a constitutional decla-

ration of war by the U.S. Congress but by a mandate from the United Nations. What gave that "mandate" legitimacy? The U.S. was a signatory to the UN treaty that under the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution (and in the absence of Bricker) could be construed to be "The Supreme Law Of The Land," overriding the treaty clause of the Constitution.

In 2008, when George W. Bush negotiated a Status of Forces Agreement with the post-Saddam government in Iraq—a treaty by any rational definition—the president refused to let the Senate see the text, much less allow it to be debated and voted upon as a treaty. Why was President Bush so anxious to conclude this "executive agreement"? Because the UN mandate authorizing the U.S. presence in Iraq was due to expire at the end of 2008.

Ironically, the two issues addressed by the Bricker Amendment—secret treaties and the usurpation of constitutional authority by a treaty organization like the United Nations—were the sole legitimizing ingredients of the Iraq War.

Although the 1952 Republican Convention strongly endorsed the Bricker Amendment, Eisenhower began backing away from it as soon as he took office in 1953. During that year, the American Legion launched a national campaign supporting Bricker, and in the course of a year my father spoke to packed Legion audiences in every state in the union. Finally, just before the amendment came up for a vote in the Senate in February 1954, Ike called my father into the Oval Office.

At first, the president was gregarious. Then came the moment of truth. “Dean,” he said—everybody called my father “Dean Manion”—“Why do you support this?”

Dad said simply that we should follow the Constitution—the president should negotiate treaties with the advice and consent of the Senate. He specifically mentioned FDR’s betrayal at Yalta.

“But Dean,” Eisenhower said, “I’m president now.”

The silence was undoubtedly uncomfortable. Finally, Ike said, “Look, Dean, if you’ll stop supporting this amendment—if you’ll just be neutral—I’ll put you on the Supreme Court.”

Well, Dad had always told his law students, “If you take the first bribe, you may as well take the rest.” So he said no, and Ike fired him. The Bricker Amendment was narrowly defeated in the Senate, and three years later, Ike appointed another Irish Catholic Democrat, William J. Brennan Jr., to the Supreme Court.

Dad came home to Indiana and launched the “Manion Forum.” Every week, from 1954 until his death in 1979, the “Forum” consistently made the case for conservative principles without regard to party or position. Dad was a staunch anticommunist, and that theme prevailed throughout the show’s long run. Early and often he took on the Warren Court. He assailed foreign aid, deficit spending, the Federal Reserve, and even Ike’s Interstate Highway System, which cost taxpayers over \$1 trillion in 2009 dollars. His vision was prescient: in 1956, he hosted a young Bill Buckley, and in 1957, he introduced Sen. Barry Goldwater to the “Forum’s” national audience. Like Tocqueville, Dad continually stressed the importance of America’s religious heritage in her tradition of ordered liberty and limited government. He opposed onerous taxes and federal involvement in agriculture, med-

icine, and education. In 1959, he caused an uproar when he asked whether Social Security was a Ponzi scheme.

The “Manion Forum” was recorded on tape every week in the library at our home in South Bend. The digital age was still far in the future, so most guests came to us. And what a list it was: Douglas MacArthur, Jesse Helms, Strom Thurmond, Barry Goldwater, Harry Byrd Sr., Bill Rickenbacker, Henry Regnery, Louis Budenz, Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, John Schmitz, Gerhart Niemeyer, Charles Rice, Stan Evans, Lew Rockwell, and countless others who were to play key roles in the growth of conservatism. Every week, our dedicated engineer, Emmett Mellenthin, sent reel-to-reel tapes (up to 500 at the show’s peak) to radio stations all over the country.

Unlike today’s talk superstars, Dad never took a salary from the “Forum.” He donated his efforts, but airtime wasn’t cheap. The program was supported by donors who responded to the annual fundraising letter that Dad would send, and they were a devoted band indeed. Dad never applied for nonprofit status because he thought that the IRS would just use it to harass him. The “Forum” paid each station for the airtime. Only occasionally did a station send word that some left-wing organization was egging on the FCC to demand “equal time” for “opposing views.” In those cases, the station managers lamented, they might have to insist that the “Forum” pay for its own time and that of the other guy as well. Needless to say, those stations were dropped. Only one station that I know of—in Media, Pennsylvania—was actually denied renewal of its license because of complaints that it featured only conservative programming like the “Forum.”

As Richard Weaver observed, ideas have consequences, and the most visible consequence of the “Manion Forum” was consequential indeed: the emer-

gence of Barry Goldwater as a national conservative leader. Fifty years ago, conservatives faced a situation very similar to that of today—two establishment-liberal major parties with bleak prospects for conservative policies. After hosting Senator Goldwater, Dad convinced him to write a book. Dad named it—*The Conscience of a Conservative*. He also convinced a young Catholic writer, L. Brent Bozell, to co-write it with Goldwater. And when he could not find a publisher, Dad founded the Victor Publishing Company, paid the printing costs, and distributed *Conscience* in time for the state party conventions of 1960. By 1964, Ronald Reagan had read *Conscience*, agreed with it, and endorsed Goldwater in “The Speech” that has endeared him to conservatives ever since.

For 25 years, the “Forum” carried the conservative message to the people, over the heads of the networks. (We all shook our fists at their skyboxes when Ike lambasted them at the 1964 convention.) It never changed its format—15 minutes a week—and, when dad died, he had broadcast 1,294 shows.

A year later, Ronald Reagan was elected president. By the end of his presidency, there were over a thousand talk-radio shows on the air. But the genre had changed permanently. Since then, conservative talk-show hosts have by and large supported the GOP and lambasted the Democrats. When party and principle parted, party usually trumped. The results are strewn all around us.

Talk’s next generation would do well to return to the medium’s roots, stick to conservative principles, and remember Dad’s admonition to his law students: “if you take the first bribe, you may as well take the rest.” ■

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Our Enemy, the President

The greatest threat to the Republic comes from the Oval Office.

By Daniel McCarthy

AFTER EIGHT YEARS of George W. Bush, conservatives find themselves back at the beginning—that is, back at the beginning of the modern American Right, circa 1933. Once more the country is in a deep financial crisis (we don't call them "depressions" anymore) for which Republicans have taken the blame. And again a pragmatic Democratic president, backed by majorities in both chambers of Congress, promises to spend us back to prosperity. After conceding the president virtually his every whim during the Bush years—with the occasional Harriet Miers-sized exception—conservatives have begun to rediscover the virtues of checks upon executive power.

The 1930s Old Right arose in reaction against Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. But conservatives today need not look back quite so far to find articulate critics of presidential aggrandizement. Unlike Roosevelt's enemies in the 1930s, James Burnham and Willmoore Kendall, two of *National Review's* original senior editors, were not strict in their devotion to individual rights, the free market, or limited government. Kendall, a "wild Yale don" in Dwight Macdonald's description, was a majority-rule democrat who held that legislatures could and should circumscribe personal liberties for the sake of national security. Burnham, a former New York University philosophy professor, was a Rockefeller Republican in politics and disciple of Machiavelli in philosophy. Yet both were as staunch as any Old Right libertarian in their hostility to presidential power. To them, the executive branch was not only the seat of liberalism but an incipient threat to the Republic.

Kendall and Burnham spoke for the mainstream Right in the 1950s and '60s. By 2007, however, right-wing attitudes toward executive power had undergone a sea change. Harvard University professor Harvey Mansfield, writing that year in the *Wall Street Journal*, gave voice to the new presidentialist attitude prevailing among conservatives in what he called, "the debate between the strong executive and its adversary, the rule of law." Mansfield argued that in times of emergency, executive power should be unfettered, both at home and, especially, in foreign policy. "One man, or, to use Machiavelli's expression, *uno solo*, will be the greatest source of energy," he wrote. "Such a person will have the greatest incentive to be watchful, and to be both cruel and merciful in correct contrast and proportion." Mansfield attributed "the difficulties of the war in Iraq" not to presidential overreach but to "a sense of inhibition."

Mansfield lent philosophic weight to the case for the strong executive, but Vice President Dick Cheney gave it the force of the policy. For 30 years, Cheney has been the Zelig of presidentialism, present whenever there is a constitutional dispute over the executive's prerogatives. As chief of staff under Gerald Ford, he chafed at the restraints Congress placed on the post-Watergate presidency's use of intelligence services. As a congressman in 1987, he was the ranking Republican on the committee investigating Iran-Contra. His minority report condemned "the boundless view of Congressional power [that] began to take hold in the 1970's, in the wake of the Vietnam War" and argued that presidents have "inherent executive

powers under Article II of the Constitution" to employ secret agents and "a broad range of foreign policy powers" as they deem best. Three years later, as secretary of defense under George H.W. Bush, Cheney asserted before the Senate Armed Forces Committee that the president did not need a congressional authorization to commit forces to the Persian Gulf. (In an intimation of things to come, Cheney cited a United Nations resolution as "not authorization, but certainly ... support" for the president's intentions.)

Indeed, burnishing executive authority seems to be a Cheney family value. Daughter Elizabeth wrote her undergraduate thesis on presidential war powers, arguing that the Framers "certainly did not intend, nor does history substantiate, the idea that Congress should legislate specific limits on the President's power." "Her father may not have written her thesis," Zac Frank commented in *Slate*, "but before and after its publication, he held unwaveringly to its ideas." Wife Lynne, for her part, published a novel in 1979 titled *Executive Privilege*, about a president besieged by the press. President Jenner, who bears a more-than-passing resemblance to Cheney, believes that "the history of the presidency in the twentieth century is the history of a gradually weakening institution. ... It's almost as though the President becomes a symbol when he's elected, a symbol to be torn down and destroyed when the nation's frustrations reach a certain pitch." The novel's plot revolves around Jenner lying to the press (and public) to protect a democratic coup in the Philippines.

That a presidential chief of staff and

later vice president would have a fond view of executive power is not surprising. But Cheney's resentment of the limitations Congress imposed upon the Nixon and Ford administrations was shared by many grassroots conservatives. In 1974, while his colleague Burnham continued to rail against "Caesarist mass democratism," *National Review* senior editor Jeffrey Hart noted with approval the Right's changing attitude toward the presidency. Hart believed that something more than mere partisanship—conservatives rallying to embattled Republicans Nixon and Ford—was at work here. He advanced two arguments of his own for right-wing presidentialism. First, he believed that only a strong president could tame the federal bureaucracy. "No matter who the people actually *vote* for," he wrote, "they end up being governed by the same semi-permanent bureaucrats and quasi-autonomous agencies." Nixon had been "making modest moves" in this direction, Hart argued, before Watergate brought him down. Alas, subsequent presidents, weak or strong, would prove equally incapable of the task.

Hart's second argument for embracing executive power was more compelling. Only the president, by virtue of his office's stature, could take on the most powerful new force for liberalism to emerge since the New Deal—the left-leaning national media. "The capacity of the media to determine the terms of the public debate gives them, at least for extended periods, a political leverage that may well be superior to that of a variegated and often ill-informed Congress," Hart contended. Thus the Fourth Estate could shape the direction of public policy—unless the president stood in the way. "The key struggle in the American political equation," Hart continued, would no longer "pit 'great' liberal Presidents against resisting Congress, as in Kendall's formulation. The key struggle, on the frequent occasions when a centrist or a conserva-

tive occupies the White House, will be between the President and the media, and it will be a contest over public opinion." Vice President Spiro Agnew had shown the way—his attacks on the media made him a popular figure, especially on the Right, until scandal brought him down.

Hart's essay was prescient. Over the next 30 years, conservatives would indeed expend as much energy fighting Dan Rather as trying to limit government. What has become apparent since Hart wrote, however, is that the media, liberal or not, and the president, Republican or not, enjoy a mutually reinforcing relationship. After all, among the many extraconstitutional roles the modern president plays is that of the nation's number-one celebrity. Kennedy, Reagan, Clinton, and now Obama made the most of this status. But even presidential failures such as Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush acquired vast influence over public discourse thanks to the media role of their office. (A sign of just how important celebrity is as a feature of the modern presidency can be seen in the power of the executive branch to make famous even those who merely seek, but do not attain, high office. Ron Paul had been arguing for sound money and non-interventionism for decades, but only when he made a run for the Republican nomination did he become a star. Before being tapped as John McCain's running mate, Sarah Palin was just another of the nation's 50 governors. Even Obama, for all his telegenic appeal, was not half the celebrity he became in 2008 before he decided to run for president.)

There are practical explanations for the symbiosis between the president and the press. Covering a presidential news conference is, after all, easier than reporting on the activities of 535 congressmen and senators organized into scores of committees. More important than this, however, are the reciprocal privileges of access. The White House can grant

favorable journalists—does anyone remember Jeff Gannon?—special access to the world's greatest celebrity. And when George H.W. Bush wanted to plead with conservatives to re-elect him after he broke his pledge not to raise taxes, he went on Rush Limbaugh's radio show. What was good for Bush was good for Rush, just as what would later be good for Bush's son was good for Fox News. Democratic presidents and the liberal media enjoy the same relationship. The careers of Jay Carney, George Stephanopoulos, and the late Tony Snow attest to the intimate link between executive power and the national media.

Far from dismantling the liberal media, conservatives' embrace of presidentialism helped create a right-wing echo chamber. Neither presidential power nor the influence of the media suffered for it. But conservatism as a philosophy, and the fortunes of the GOP in Congress, did suffer.

The nexus of presidentialism and media power hastened the emergence of a nationalized, homogeneous conservatism that contributed to the Right's downfall in 2006 and 2008. Through the president—Nixon, Regan, or the Bushes—the Right learned to speak with and listen to one voice. Earlier conservatives had pronounced regional accents: Southern conservatism was very much its own thing; the Midwestern Right, even during the Cold War, had a noninterventionist and populist streak; both coasts had their own regional variations. Reagan as a media figure, the "Great Communicator" if not the great administrator, successfully blended these regional voices into his own. But by the time of George W. Bush, the accent of conservatism sounded the same across the country—it was the twang of a Southwestern oilman.

At the same time as the polyphony of the old conservatism gave way to monoglot presidentialism, liberals recovered their fluency in speaking the

language of the states. That fluency goes far toward explaining how Democrats maintained their hold on Congress—where regional and local interests still count for something—throughout the years of conservative ascendancy in the executive branch. This may even account for why liberals have failed at national talk radio—although they control the mainstream media, which tries hard not to present itself as an official mouthpiece of liberalism, the Left finds it difficult to speak with one universally popular voice (or ideology) to the whole country.

Kendall and Burnham had warned about the dangers of letting the presidency symbolize or speak for the nation—one of their reasons for believing the executive branch to be inherently liberal was its seemingly direct connection (the Electoral College notwithstanding) to the public. Those who wish to see a Rousseauvian General Will expressed within the American constitutional form would naturally look to the executive branch. The General Will must be indivisible and univocal, which within the American system only the president can be.

By contrast, Congress embodied plurality and diverse local interests. The “little platoons” of Edmund Burke may not have direct representation in Congress, but the organs of civil society—families, churches, businesses, civic associations—have considerably more sway within congressional districts than within the great pool of the presidential electorate. Kendall emphasized that conservatism depended upon these local institutions, and whatever virtue might be found in government relied upon the expression of these ordered (and often hierarchical) interests within the legislature. Not only did Congress give voice to these groups, but the machinery of the legislature worked toward compromise and consensus—in contrast to presidential unilateralism. This made the legislature a poor

venue for idealism or “high principle” but an excellent medium for deliberation and prudence.

The tendency of the executive is always to reach over the heads of the little platoons and appeal to absolute truth and national unity, according to Kendall. He wrote:

Because the Executive so clearly represents ‘high principle and knowledge,’ the conclusion is well nigh irresistible that Congress represents low principle (or, worse still, no principle at all)...

The Executive regards ‘pork barrel’ measures as ‘selfish’ and ‘particular,’ and does what it can, through pressure and maneuver, to forestall them. It appeals frequently to a national interest that is allegedly different from and superior to the interests of the constituencies.

To presidentialists, as Burnham noted, “intermediary institutions always appear to be incomplete, distorted and obstructive expressions of the general will. Through them are expressed the interests of classes, local regions, industries, churches, races, or other sub-sections of the people as a whole.” Yet “it is precisely through these intermediary institutions that the otherwise formless, politically meaningless, abstract entity, ‘the people,’ is given structure, and become articulate, organized, operationally significant.” If these organs are bypassed, the Republic is doomed: “Caesar is equivalent to the destruction of the intermediary institutions, or at least of their independence.”

This suggests another, subtler reason for the conservative turn toward executive power. Civil society and social authority have been besieged since the 1960s, in part by the growth of state power and in part by upheavals such as the sexual and civil-rights revolutions. In the absence of strong social authority,

Caesar has become more appealing to the Right. He provides a direct outlet for the energies of activists who would like to stage a counter-revolution. Yet conservatives who support Caesar misunderstand the nature of the problem, which lies less with the triumph of the political Left than with the (related but distinct) decline of traditional authority. Presidential power not only cannot restore that social authority but actually displaces it, as Kendall and Burnham warned.

The effects of right-wing presidentialism can be seen in the reckless behavior of the Bush administration and in the decline of intellectual conservatism. By embracing executive power, the Right tacitly embraced the qualities that Kendall and Burnham identified with the president: idealism in foreign policy; abstract values-talk in domestic politics; energy and action, rather than prudence and deliberation, both at home and abroad. The tenor of the intellectual Right during the Bush years—and indeed since Nixon—has echoed the qualities of the executive branch itself, above all in a preference for absolutes over prudent deliberation and consensus.

This may explain why conservatives over 60 frequently detested the Bush administration, while those under 50 embraced it. The older conservatives possess “legislative” characters. The younger generation has “presidential” personalities. In Platonic terms, their souls mirror the element of the Republic to which they give their allegiance.

Right-wing presidentialism failed spectacularly under Bush and has now yielded to what may be the strongest expression of left-wing presidentialism since Franklin Roosevelt. Conservatives have an important lesson to learn here. They must not only oppose Obama as they once opposed FDR, they must recognize the threat that presidential power represents to an ordered Republic no matter which party occupies the Oval Office. ■

What's the Tory?

David Cameron, Conservative chameleon

By Freddy Gray

NOW IS THE WINTER of Republican discontent. It is widely agreed that the party needs to reinvent itself. It is also apparent that nobody knows what that means. For all the exhausting conservative introspection since the Democratic sweep of Nov. 4, there has been scant inspiration.

Yet one argument is gaining momentum. The Grand Old Party, to avoid being out of power for at least a generation, should imitate the modernizing example of the British Conservative Party under David Cameron.

This idea is hardly novel. On Jan. 1, 2006—less than a month after Cameron's election as Conservative leader—Rod Dreher enthusiastically identified the new-look Tories as fellow “crunchy conservatives.” Writing in the *London Times*, Dreher commended the “conservative truth” in Cameron's concern for the environment and Britain's “broken society.” “Get on with it, Cameron,” he wrote. “Many of us American conservatives ... are watching and hoping you can pull this thing off.”

More recently, and perhaps more ominously, a number of Right-leaning Atlanticists have also embraced the Tory strategy. At a Hoover Institution lunch in December, former Bush speechwriter David Frum, deftly repositioning himself as the GOP's intellectual savior, suggested that American conservatives could profit from the example of their British—and Canadian—counterparts. On Frum's new website, “New Majority: Conservatism That Can Win Again,” one contributor praises the “diverse policy areas” of Cameron's agenda.

In May 2008, the Cameron model even

received the imprimatur of David Brooks, who wrote in his *New York Times* column, “It used to be that American conservatives shaped British political thinking. Now the influence is going the other way. ... The Conservatives have successfully ‘decontaminated’ their brand. They're offering something in tune with the times. ... The only question is whether Republicans will learn those lessons sooner, or whether they will learn them later, after a decade or so in the wilderness.”

Most pundits admit the obvious weakness in their analogy: America is not Britain. Yet they still underestimate the gigantic cultural and political—not to mention physical—differences between the United States and the United Kingdom. It is infinitely more difficult to “rebrand” a party, as the Conservatives seem to have done, in a country as huge, populous, and diverse as America. In the U.S., for one, there is no equivalent of the BBC telling everybody what to think. (That may seem churlish, but it is hard to exaggerate the pervasiveness of the Beeb in British life or the extent to which Cameron's message has been tailored to appeal to the corporation's journalists.)

Yet the parallels between the current predicament of the American Right and the recent history of its British cousin do bear consideration. In 1997, British Conservatives, like Republicans last year, were defeated by a seemingly unstoppable political force. Tony Blair, like Barack Obama, instilled a mood of delirious national optimism. He also dominated the political middle ground, outmaneuvering the Conservatives at

every turn. The Tories were reduced to being the “nasty party,” distrusted, reviled, and ridiculed—much like today's Republicans.

In 2005, however, the Conservatives, having lost several general elections, changed course. They elected the young and dynamic Cameron, who adeptly recast the party's image by focusing on climate change and social injustice. He wore Converse and quoted Gandhi. He dropped his opposition to gay marriage, along with some of his vowels. In short, he tried to become more Blair than Blair—or, as he is reported to have put it, “the heir to Blair.” The ploy seemed to work. Under Cameron's leadership, the party's position in the polls dramatically improved. And after Blair resigned in 2007, with the eminently unlovable Gordon Brown taking his place, Cameron's stock rose higher still.

It is not hard to see why many Republicans—their popularity greatly diminished, particularly among the young, by eight years of George W. Bush—might want a Cameron of their own, someone who will attune the party message to the political zeitgeist. But there can be no certainty that American political trends are pursuing British ones and not the other way around. Contra David Brooks, the historical parallel can just as easily be framed from the opposite direction. After all, Blair's political strategy was based on the triangulating ultra-centrism of Bill Clinton, while Cameron, in his opening speech as leader, talked about “compassionate conservatism,” the very words used by Bush in his quest for the White House.

Moreover, the widespread approbation for the Tories ignores an important reality: Cameron's party is not that popular. After 12 years of Labour rule, with the widely loathed Brown pushing Britain to the brink of financial ruin, the Conservatives are still by no means certain to win the next general election.

They have only recently begun to build a significant lead in the polls. A YouGov survey last month put Tory support at 43 percent, with Labour at 32 percent. The British public may be fed up with their government, but that does not mean they have warmed to the opposition.

Part of the problem lies with Cameron himself rather than his politics. His upper-class origins can irritate the average voter, particularly, it seems, when he pronounces on global warming. As Frum noted in *Comeback: Conservatism That Can Win Again*, changing the conservative position on the environment is well and good, but “there is something off-putting about David Cameron, ex-Eton, ex-Oxford’s Bullingdon Club, heir to an old gentry name and fortune, telling his class inferiors to take their vacations at home. Is that the kind of party we want the GOP to be?”

Republicans, who specialize in class warfare, can probably avoid that trap. But they should recognize that the Tories’ inability to pull away in the polls stems from more challenging difficulties than those associated with Cameron’s background. Having dramatically shunted to the center, the Conservatives are easily attacked, especially by wounded right-wingers, as unprincipled chameleons. Even the party’s former joint chairman, Lord Saatchi, called them “the say-anything-to-get-elected Tories.”

It should be recalled, though, that many people, on Left and Right, felt the same way about Tony Blair, and he never lost an election. Cameron’s problem might be still more profound. After successfully repositioning the Tories closer to the middle, he now finds that, under the pressure of the financial crisis, the atom of Blairite centrism—with its faith in the unifying power of neoliberal and global economics—is splitting. Since the stock markets began collapsing in earnest in October, Brown has veered left, virtually nationalizing the British

banking system and presenting himself as the mega-statist savior of the global future. Cameron found himself stuck. He did not want to be cast as the unpatriotic opponent to “Super Gordon,” yet he could not be seen to accept Brown’s dangerous overhaul of the monetary system. Brown’s approval ratings surged, while Cameron’s floundered. This “Brown bounce” lasted only a few weeks, but it was enough to show a weakness in the Conservatives’ position—a flaw that would-be reformers of the GOP should note.

On the other hand, the looming economic catastrophe has given Cameron an opportunity to reiterate the compassionate strands of his Tory blend, enthralling disillusioned conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic with his promises of “radical social reform.” At the Davos World Economic Forum, Cameron struck a distinctly localist and antiglobalist tone as he denounced “capitalism without a conscience.” He expressed dismay at a world in which “someone working in the local branch of a global corporation can feel like little more than flotsam in some vast international sea of business.”

In the last few weeks, Cameron has cultivated an intriguing alliance with political philosopher and theologian Philip Blond, a “new localist” who believes the financial crisis demands a revival of “the tradition of communitarian civic conservatism,” or “Red Toryism.” In the latest issue of the British magazine *Prospect*, Blond says, “British conservatism must not ... repeat the American error of preaching ‘morals plus the market’ while ignoring the fact that economic liberalism has often been the cover for monopoly capitalism and is therefore just as socially damaging as Left-wing statism.” He goes on to urge Cameron, in a passage that has electrified sections of the conservative blogosphere, to reject the ideology of social mobility, framed as it is in the “neo-liberal language

of opportunity, education and choice.” He continues, “This language says that unless you are in the golden circle of the top 10 to 15 per cent of top-rate taxpayers you are essentially insecure, unsuccessful and without merit or value.” Blond’s Red Tory manifesto includes plans to implement government subsidiarity and break up “unrecognised private sector monopolies,” such as supermarket giant Tesco.

At the recent “Progressive Conservatism Launch” hosted by Demos, Blond told Cameron that the Tories’ “political agenda is far more radical, far-reaching, and transformative than the majority suspect.” Yet the philosopher might be deluding himself. Cameron’s Conservatism, for all its nods to Burke, for all the high-minded waffle about the “atomization” of modern life, offers little hope of effective reform. The party’s policy proposals—divided into platitudinous headings such as “Advancing Opportunity” and “Protecting Security”—suggest that any “Red Tory” influence is marginal.

Cameron’s true identity remains, like that of most gifted politicians, elusive. Is he a proper conservative lurking under the veneer of a centralizing populist or the other way around? Is he Dave the Burkean hero of postmodernity? Or Dave the progressive champion of gay marriage? This very slipperiness appeals to many of his admirers. Certainly, Cameron’s success in charming not only establishment Republicans such as Frum and Brooks but unusual and original thinkers like Dreher and Blond reveals impressive political dexterity. But the British electorate appears less than convinced. The real Cameron will only be defined by what he does if and when he becomes prime minister. Until that time, he represents a poor exemplar for the future GOP. For now, the only lesson American conservatives can learn from David Cameron is that there are no lessons to be learned from David Cameron. ■

Ethnonationalism Rules

STANDING BEFORE the Siegessaule, the Victory Column that commemorates Prussia's triumphs over Denmark, Austria, and France in the wars that birthed the Second Reich, Barack Obama declared himself a "citizen of the world" and spoke of "a world that stands as one."

Globalists rejoiced. And the election of this son of a white teenager from Kansas and a black academic from Kenya is said to have ushered us into the new "post-racial" age.

Are we deluding ourselves? Worldwide, the mightiest force of the 20th century, ethnonationalism—that creator and destroyer of nations and empires; that enduring drive of peoples for a nation-state where their faith and culture is dominant and their race or tribe is supreme—seems more manifest than ever.

"Vote Reflects Racial Divide" ran the banner in the *Washington Times* over a story datelined, "Santa Cruz, Bolivia":

The Bolivian vote to approve a new constitution backed by leftist President Evo Morales reflected racial divisions between the nation's Indian majority and those with European ancestry.

Provinces where mestizos and Europeans predominate voted down the constitution. But it carried with huge majorities the Indian tribes of the western highlands, for this constitution is about group rights.

In 2005, Morales came to office resolved to redistribute wealth and power away from Europeans to his own Aymara tribe and other "indigenous peoples" he contends were robbed by the Europeans who began to arrive 500 years ago, in the time of Columbus.

Pizarro's victory over the Inca Empire is to be overturned.

According to Article 190 of the new constitution, Bolivia's 36 Indian areas are authorized to "exercise their jurisdictional functions through their own principles, values, culture, norms and procedures." Tribal law is to become provincial law and national law.

Gov. Mario Cossio of Tarija, which voted no, says the new constitution will create a "totalitarian regime," controlled through an "ethnically based bureaucracy." Morales replies, "Original Bolivians who have been here for a thousand years are many but poor. Recently arrived Bolivians are few but rich."

Bolivia is Balkanizing, dividing up and being divided on the lines of tribe, race, and class. And, hailed by Hugo Chavez, Morales's Bolivia is not the only place where the claims of ethnicity, tribe, and race are conquering the forces of universalism and globalism.

After a disputed election in Kenya, the Kikuyu were subjected to ethnic cleansing and massacres by Luo. In Zimbabwe, white farmers are being dispossessed due to their ancestry.

In Vladimir Putin's time, Russians have crushed Chechens, confronted Estonians over Russian military graves and war memorials, collided with Ukrainians over the Crimea, and bloodied up the Georgians.

Beijing crushes the Uighurs who want their own East Turkestan and Tibetans who seek autonomy.

In Europe, populist anti-immigrant parties, alarmed at a loss of national identities, are striding toward respectability and power. The Vlaams Belang, seeking independence for Flanders, is the biggest party in the Belgian parliament. The Peoples' Party and Freedom Party are now Austria's second and third most popular. The Swiss People's Party of Christoph

Blocher is the largest in Bern.

All are ethnonationalist. Writes British diplomat Sir Christopher Meyer, "It is useless to say that nationalism and ethnic tribalism have no place in the international relations of the 21st century."

Meanwhile, global institutions, the United Nations, IMF, and European Union, have lost their luster. Czechs—whose president, Vaclav Klaus, regards the EU as a prison house of nations—hold the EU presidency. When the financial crisis hit, Irish, Brits, and Germans rushed to bail out their own banks, as did Americans, who rescued Ford, Chrysler, and GM, leaving Toyota, Hyundai, and Honda twisting in the wind.

This is economic nationalism.

Barack won the African-American vote 97 percent to 3 percent over John McCain, and 90 percent to 10 percent over Hillary Clinton in the later primaries. McCain ran stronger than George W. Bush only in Appalachia, the laager of the Scots-Irish.

In Jerry Z. Muller's "Us and Them: The Enduring Power of Ethnic Nationalism," in *Foreign Affairs*, his thesis is:

Americans generally belittle the role of ethnic nationalism in politics. But ... it corresponds to some enduring propensities of the human spirit. It is galvanized by modernization, and ... it will drive global politics for generations to come. Once ethnic nationalism has captured the imagination of groups in a multiethnic society, ethnic disaggregation or partition is often the least bad answer.

Disaggregation or partition, the man said. Are we really in a post-racial America, or is our multicultural multiethnic America, too, destined for Balkanization and break-up? ■

Mormons at the Door

Can social conservatives assimilate the LDS into their movement?

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

IN 1898, B.H. ROBERTS, a high-ranking member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was elected to represent Utah in the House. At the time, Americans could grudgingly accept a Mormon politician as long as he wasn't too Mormon. But Roberts still lived with the three wives he had married before the LDS church ended polygamy. Protestant ministerial associations and newspapers like the *New York Evening Journal* petitioned Congress to refuse Roberts his seat. The voices of rectitude delivered 7 million signatures written on 28 scrolls wrapped in the American flag to the Capitol. The House voted 268-50 against Roberts. His seat was given to a one-woman Mormon whose faith could be glossed over.

Over a century later, assertive Mormonism may find its political home in the conservative movement. The faith that once seemed like a threat to Christian values is increasingly viewed as an ally by social conservatives looking for recruits in the culture war. As Mormons have stepped forward to lead efforts against gay marriage, the enmity of liberals to the LDS church has increased. But evangelical hostility to Mormonism seems to be melting into acceptance, even admiration.

The "not-too Mormon" rule lingered from Roberts's time to Mitt Romney's recent presidential campaign, despite the impressive progress Mormons have made in politics. America's 5.5 million Latter Day Saints make up just 1.6 percent of the population yet hold over 5 percent of congressional seats. Their ranks include Republican firebrand Jeff

Flake and Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. Church leaders like Ezra Taft Benson have served honorably in appointed office, and George W. Bush awarded LDS President Gordon B. Hinkley the Medal of Freedom.

But few elected officials have made Mormonism integral to their political identity—for good reason. Early in Romney's campaign, *USA Today* reported, "as far back as 1967, only three quarters of Americans said they would vote for an otherwise well qualified person who was a Mormon. ... Some 40 years later—the results to this question are almost exactly the same." After Romney delivered his "Faith in America" speech addressing the Mormon question directly, Lawrence O'Donnell railed on "The McLaughlin Group," "Romney comes from a religion that was founded by a criminal who was anti-American, pro-slavery, and a rapist!"

Though many religious conservative leaders hoped to endorse Romney, they found that a sizable portion of their flocks shared O'Donnell's sentiments. James Dobson told talk-show host Laura Ingraham, "I don't believe that conservative Christians will vote for a Mormon, but that remains to be seen, I guess." Popular evangelical radio-preacher Bill Keller warned, "If you vote for Mitt Romney, you are voting for Satan!"

Romney's campaign was derailed when Evangelicals turned to Baptist preacher-turned-politician, Mike Huckabee. His enthusiastic reception at the Values Voters conference prevented Dobson and other Religious Right lead-

ers from endorsing Romney. Huckabee poked at Romney's faith, asking a *New York Times* reporter, "Don't Mormons believe that Jesus and the devil are brothers?" His strong showing among evangelical voters in the South doomed Romney's bid.

But evangelical hostilities don't last forever. When John F. Kennedy ran for president, many conservative evangelicals believed the Pope was the antichrist. The president of the National Association of Evangelicals warned, "Public opinion is changing in favor of the church of Rome. We dare not sit idly by—voiceless and voteless." But two decades later, as Catholics took the lead in protesting abortion, evangelicals gradually traded theological rivalry for political co-operation. The alliance has become so natural that evangelicals were willing to reject co-religionist Harriet Miers as a nominee for the Supreme Court in favor of the more qualified Catholic Samuel Alito.

The same process of assimilation into the social conservative movement may be taking place for Mormons. Soon after the California Supreme Court declared same-sex marriage constitutional, Catholic Bishop of San Francisco George Niederauer asked the LDS church to join a multifaith coalition against gay marriage. By June, Elder Lance Wickman, a top LDS official, called Prop 8 "The Gettysburg of the culture war." Church members fell in line, ready for a fight.

The LDS church rarely involves itself directly in politics, and its effort in California's "Protect Marriage Coalition" represented a shift in church policy. In a

satellite simulcast from Salt Lake City to Californian church members, Elder Clinton Cook instructed, "Give your best to this most significant effort to support in every way possible, the sacred institution of marriage."

Mormons' best efforts proved essential. Though California's 770,000 Latter Day Saints make up 2.2 percent of the population, Mormons contributed over half of the \$40 million used in the Prop 8 battle. In the last two weeks of the campaign, the Protect Marriage Coalition received a \$1 million donation from Alan C. Ashton, grandson of a former president of the LDS church. Not only did Mormons give money, they gave time. One strategist for Protect Marriage, Jeff Flint, estimated that Mormons made up 80 to 90 percent of the early door-to-door volunteers. Freg Karger, a leader of Californians Against Hate and Prop 8 opponent, says, "We were surprised by how heavy they came into this. ... Without their millions of dollars and ground troops, it would have been a very different 'Yes on 8' campaign."

Long known as reliable fundraisers and behind-the-scenes organizers in Republican politics, Mormons made Proposition 8 their coming out party as a social conservative force. But their involvement came at a price. Justin Hart, a member of the LDS church and a conservative commentator, laments, "There was this huge target put on our backs."

In the final days of the campaign, a pro-gay marriage ad, "Home Invasion," depicted Mormon missionaries ransacking the home of a lesbian couple, taking their wedding rings, and tearing up their marriage license. Tom Hanks called Mormon Prop 8 supporters, "un-American." One Utah lawyer, Nadine Hansen, set up a website, "Mormonsfor8.com," which encouraged dissenting Mormons to "out" contributors to "Yes for 8" as Mormons and post information about their wards and places of work.

Because of the backlash, Mormons have shied away from media coverage they cannot control. LDS members who were directly involved with Prop 8 have been asked not to comment to the media. But the institutional church has gone on a press offensive, inviting journalists into its newest temple and discussing their involvement in politics. Shrewdly, Mormon leaders have shifted the debate about marriage to a debate about free exercise of religion. Elder Clinton Cook in an address to LDS members warned that the acceptance of gay marriage would inevitably lead to "legal penalties and social ostracism" for the religious. In this formulation, Mormons are just one of many faith groups seeking to protect their freedom of conscience.

The combination of political strength Mormons demonstrated in the campaign and their perceived suffering afterwards has bonded them to other religious conservatives. "They wanted to show other religions that they saved them," Hart says. "When we get beat up in the press, it is a badge of honor. And in the conservative movement, it has endeared us to a lot of different groups. They say, 'Wow, thanks to the Mormons for making it happen.'"

After Prop 8, evangelical opinion leaders exhorted their audiences to stop worrying and learn to love the Latter Day Saints. John Mark Reynolds, a professor at evangelical Biola University wrote, "In the battle for the family..... traditional Christians have no better friends than the Mormon faithful." A petition to thank the LDS church for its participation in the Prop 8 campaign circulated on conservative websites, and James Dobson signed it. Presbyterian writer John Schroeder said, "We Evangelicals must thank our Mormon cousins. They, along with our Catholic brethren, were better organized than us and that provided a base from which we could all work together to get this job done."

Social conservatives stand to gain much from extending their coalition. As the Prop 8 campaign highlighted, Latter Day Saints offer resources and organization to a movement that often finds itself underfunded and adrift. But the downsides of such an alliance are significant. Though they are fast growing group, Mormons are still a religious minority, concentrated in the mountain West. Their historical and theological baggage may be too much for a mainstream political movement to bear. Evangelicals and Catholics have based their co-operation on a shared belief in the doctrines of the Nicene Creed. Mormons have a continuing revelation, one that many orthodox Christians believe to be flexible in the face of political exigencies. Polygamy was suspended in the LDS church once statehood was offered to Utah, and blacks were allowed to enter the Mormon priesthood not long after protests made Mormon beliefs in the origin of racial differences a national embarrassment. Christians may ask: will the LDS church eventually leave behind its current social commitments?

There are downsides to an alliance for Mormons as well. By hitching themselves to the conservative movement, Mormons risk alienating many co-religionists who have enjoyed a religious community that has for several generations remained politically diverse.

Political realities have made social conservatives open to co-operation with Mormons. Without the LDS church, gay marriage would remain settled law in California. Losing ground among the young and the educated, social conservatives need to be creative in building a constituency for their ideas. But inviting the LDS into the movement will test the limits of co-belligerence. There is something amiss about a mutable and pluralistic coalition claiming to stand against the dictatorship of relativism. ■

Fear Itself

How pop culture and Pearl Harbor drove the Japanese-American internment

By Otis L. Graham

FIFTY-SEVEN YEARS AGO this month, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, creating exclusion zones around strategic installations on the West Coast and authorizing the relocation of residents of Japanese ancestry to ten sites in the interior. Some 112,000 “Japanese”—two-thirds of them American citizens—were sent to internment camps, where they spent much, in some cases all, of the war.

For almost 30 years, I taught a course in modern U.S. History at UC Santa Barbara, a campus washed on its western edge by the Pacific surf, just a few miles south of a junction on the coastal highway that had been shelled by a Japanese submarine a few weeks after Pearl Harbor. I could have left “the Japanese Removal” out of my courses, as my teachers on the East Coast had done. But I believed that the nation’s bad moments must be addressed along with the good, and this was one of the bad ones. The internment, in my view, was driven far more by hysteria and ethnic suspicion than military necessity. It is a blemish on the history of civil liberties in America and demands critical scrutiny.

When I began teaching at UCSB in 1966, the students’ reaction to my annual lecture was quite passive. They were overwhelmingly Caucasian and seemed little interested. But as the years passed, the proportion of students of Asian origin in my classes increased, and those of Japanese heritage strongly challenged my interpretations.

I regretted the relocation as unjustified, while noting that the presence of sig-

nificant numbers of West Coast residents of Japanese ancestry raised serious concerns about espionage and sabotage, though the American government had little reliable evidence of a “fifth column.” I pointed out that the governments of Canada and Mexico also relocated and imprisoned residents of Japanese ancestry, on a smaller scale, suggesting that responsible officials and some neighboring citizens at the time had a different view from we angry critics decades later.

The Japanese-American students, who sat in a group, frowned through this lecture and at the end invariably objected to what they considered my tepid critique of American racism in general and anti-Japanese bigotry in particular. They rejected my suggestion that mitigating circumstances—the Pearl Harbor attack and continuing West Coast vulnerability, the relocation decisions of the Canadian and Mexican governments—deserved some place in the accounting. I sensed that “the Japanese Relocation lecture” each February was occasioning no real dialogue or reassessment. I began to consider it my least effective lecture, yet could not bring myself to abandon the topic.

One Friday evening, after my annual lecture and an especially sour student grumble, my wife and I had dinner with Susie and Phillip French. Susie was a friend of long standing, her new husband Phillip a tall, muscular veteran of the Alpine campaigns of the Fifth Mountain Division in World War II and currently a ranch salesman. Over cocktails, I described the agitated student reaction.

“Can I give that lecture on the Japanese Removal next year?” Phillip asked.

I found some acceptable way to inquire about his qualifications. “I was born and raised on a ranch near Paso Robles,” he responded. “Several Japanese families lived near or on the property, and Japanese children were among my childhood friends and schoolmates. I was in the National Guard in March 1942 when my unit received orders to round up Japanese families for transportation to a nearby armory and then to a place called Manzanar. I want to tell your students why I obeyed these orders without complaint or reservation.”

His purpose, he said, would be to acquaint my class not only with the coastal fears of further Japanese attacks or espionage, but also with the stereotype of the Japanese conveyed to my generation of Americans through the popular culture of the 1920s and ’30s. He would not ask for forgiveness but for broader understanding of the circumstances of that emotional time. Phillip assured me that he would use the year ahead for research and would give me a preview of his presentation, after which I could back out of the deal if I wished.

I sensed that having Phillip as guest lecturer would give my students a welcome break from the views of Professor Graham, who was 7 years old and living in Arkansas when the relocation took place. Phillip spent ten months in preparation, gave me a preview, and one Friday afternoon in March—was it 1980?—I introduced him to my class of some 250 students. The Japanese-Amer-

icans sat in a knot of about 20 in the rear of the hall. This is a condensed version of what he said:

"I was raised in Paso Robles, California, on a ranch, and Japanese-American families were our working partners, their children my schoolmates and pals. On Dec. 7, 1941, a Japanese task force, without a declaration of war, attacked the American base at Pearl Harbor and other targets in the Pacific, killing more than 2,200 Americans. In December and January, the location and intentions of the Japanese fleet were unknown, and Americans on the Pacific coast were in a high state of anxiety. For security reasons, the Rose Bowl on New Year's Day 1942 was played on the East Coast.

"That winter, Japanese submarines released incendiary balloons off the Oregon and Washington coasts, and one sub shelled a portion of Highway 1 north of Santa Barbara. Rumors of plans for further military attacks and sabotage

Honolulu, knife in hand and—one must assume—treachery in mind. Some of his material was drawn from articles in magazines like *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post* or books such as Julian Street's *Mysterious Japan*. The portrait of the Japanese that he drew out of American popular culture in his formative years was an unrelieved story of a furtive, inscrutable people, their feelings hidden behind a mask.

Then the pictures turned violent. The centerpiece of his presentation was the depiction in American media of the "Rape of Nanking." The capital of the Chinese Republic fell to Imperial Japanese forces on Dec. 13, 1937, and sources estimated that up to 300,000 Chinese civilians were tortured and massacred long after the military outcome was settled. American media obtained film and still photos of the most shocking brutalities—rapes of women and children, beheadings, mass burials alive. Phillip

on Pearl Harbor. When I was asked, in February and March 1942, to load Japanese-American families on trucks to be 'relocated' for security reasons, I did so, along with my fellow soldiers. Perhaps the young Japanese pilots who turned the battleship *Arizona* into a tomb for 1,177 young Americans could, if invited, present similar slide-shows illuminating how as young people they acquired their willingness to inflict harm on people they did not know. When we prepare to condemn the actions of others, we should first walk a while in their shoes."

Phillip stepped back. The 50 minutes was over, though the students raised no hands signaling questions. After an awkward silence in which I floundered in search of appropriate closure, a student rose from the Japanese-American clump. "Mr. French, there is much to discuss, and we would like to invite you to have dinner with a group of us in Isla Vista" (the student enclave on the northwest edge of campus). Phillip agreed with enthusiasm, and within moments, Susie and I watched our expected dinner partner walk away from campus toward the sunset, surrounded by a dozen or so Japanese-American students, talking animatedly and at once—and for three hours afterward, Phillip later told me.

I tried to sign him up for an annual appearance, but he had done his thing, offering an explanation, if not an apology, to the students and, I realized, to his Paso Robles Japanese-American neighbors. I later learned that his father stored the household goods of those Japanese-Americans relocated from the ranch and returned them when the families were released. ■

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MY IMAGE OF "THE JAPANESE" WAS SHAPED BY THE MOVIES, THE PRINT MEDIA, THE COMIC BOOKS OF MY ERA, AND BY A SAVAGE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR.

saturated the media. Could we trust our Japanese-American neighbors now that Japan and America were locked in total war? I was a 19-year-old National Guardsman and read the local newspapers and heard radio news [here Phillip began a slide show], which almost daily conveyed predictions by public officials and military personnel of Japanese-American civilian sabotage plans and even some aborted attempts."

The rest of his lecture was accompanied by minimal commentary. Phillip instead projected single images or footage from Hollywood movies in which shadowy, slant-eyed, obviously sinister and murderous Japanese figures lurked behind curtains of beads or doors in dimly lit rooms in San Francisco or

closed with photos from American magazines of the art of "death by a thousand cuts," with knife-wielding Orientals—identified as Japanese—slowly peeling layers of skin from live victims.

"I do not show you these words and images because they are accurate depictions of anything but American media representations of Japanese in the U.S. and in the Pacific war," Phillip said in conclusion. "They were a powerful force in shaping my own and my fellow soldiers' emotions in the weeks after Pearl Harbor. I liked the Japanese families I worked and played with on our isolated ranch, but my image of Japan itself and of "the Japanese" was shaped by the movies, the print media, the comic books of my era, and by a savage attack

Counter Intelligence

Today's CIA serves contractors and bureaucrats—not the nation.

By Philip Giraldi

SUPPOSE YOU WERE GIVEN the dark mission of spending \$50 billion a year to create a global intelligence organization that would be minimally effective. You would want to keep 90 percent of the employees in their home country and incentivize senior staff to stay “close to the flagpole” to enhance their promotion prospects. Training costs should be high—\$500,000 per recruit—and bureaucracy so stifling that a third of incoming officers will swiftly wash out. To keep morale low, surround those who remain with contractors—about half of the workforce—and pay the hired guns twice as much as the staff. Add a high level of corruption, routine cover-ups of malfeasance and incompetence, and you would have today's CIA. It is, as one critic noted, “a sorry blend of Monty Python and Big Brother.”

The Sept. 11 attacks caught the Agency off guard. After the devastating budget cuts of the Clinton years, the CIA was desperately trying to rebuild its capabilities, yet it was still gripped by a Cold War mindset. The over-the-horizon threat from China figured far more prominently than terrorism or nuclear proliferation. But overnight that orientation shifted, and this sclerotic bureaucracy was tasked with becoming the leading edge in the Bush administration's war on terror. Its budget exploded.

Many of the highly motivated but poorly prepared new hires came in without foreign-language fluency. Few had lived or worked outside the United States. Rather than being sent to overseas posts, most were shunted into CIA

offices popping up like mushrooms across the United States. Even non-official cover operatives, very expensive and specially trained officers under business cover, were frequently given domestic assignments because there was no place to put them. When the National Clandestine Service needed to increase “operators” overseas—usually because some congressman was nosing around—it prescribed sightseeing and “area familiarization” trips, which the dispatched officers referred to as “Axis of Evil Tourism.” The new CIA thus became its own false front—long on numbers, short on depth.

In a stopgap move designed to buy time to train the newcomers, numerous Agency retirees were called back to the colors as contractors, their clearances renewed. But contracting quickly became a way for senior managers to featherbed their own staffs. By 2002, contractors made up one third of the burgeoning workforce. By 2006, they were more than half, and, according to some estimates, up to 70 percent in certain areas, including the Clandestine Service. Some even found positions as chiefs of station, unimaginable when the contractor program was initiated. Experienced officers, spying an opportunity, retired early to set up their own companies and return as contractors. They could collect their pensions and also get back on the payroll at much higher salaries.

Contractors are not cheap and, once introduced into a bureaucracy, they tend to grow like Topsy. The average federal government civil servant costs \$128,000

per year, including benefits and legacy issues like pensions. Intelligence contractors make that much in salary alone—and sometimes significantly more because of the market value of their security clearances. The companies that employ them use a formula that multiplies the base salary by two and a half to four to come up with the figure that they charge the government. A contractor working for the CIA can easily cost taxpayers half a million dollars per year.

Ready availability of contractors to staff the myriad layers of bureaucracy in Langley encouraged the proliferation of what would be non-jobs anywhere else, what former CIA Chief of Station Milt Bearden described as headquarters' “buggy-whip makers.” Moreover, intelligence officers who serve overseas are able to retire early by American standards because the job is high stress and, after a point, the officer burns out. Contracting takes many of these officers considered to be less effective and puts them back into the system.

Eventually the growth of contracting alarmed even Congress, and in June 2007 CIA Director Michael Hayden agreed to cut the contractor numbers by 10 percent. It now appears, however, that commitment will be achieved by a hiring freeze rather than any actual cut in positions.

But concentrating on what the CIA has become since 9/11 ignores the roots of the problem. Anyone who has ever worked for the Agency would probably concede that the CIA's reality has never

equaled its mystique. In Rome Station in the 1980s, officers, bemused by the oppressive bureaucracy and strutting incompetence of chiefs who could not speak Italian, would joke about the “real CIA,” speculating that it must exist somewhere, possibly concealed in the Department of Agriculture offices at the embassy or hidden down in the commissary behind the rack of prosciutto.

The Agency has undeniably had successes, but weighed against the cost and measured against the national interest they have been few and far between. From its founding, the CIA has been burdened by unrealistic expectations, often poorly led, politically manipulated, and sometimes corrupt. It failed to realize that even its supposed victories would bear bitter fruit—Afghanistan is a case in point. And the Agency’s ability to predict and counter threats against the United States, the purpose for which it was created by the National Security Act of 1947, has been almost nonexistent. Double agents from Russia, Cuba, China, and MI-6 all penetrated the Agency, and its old-boy culture led to the failure to identify Aldrich Ames, a traitor within its own ranks who betrayed our few agents in Moscow. Despite years of effort and billions of dollars, the CIA has never obtained policy-level information on key international adversaries. The development of nuclear weapons by the USSR and China, the Korean War, and India’s test of an atomic bomb all took the Agency by surprise. From 1969 onward, it bowed to political pressure to overestimate the size of the Russian economy.

More recently, the Agency failed to predict and stop the 9/11 attacks, and its preparation of the National Intelligence Estimate of October 2002 was wrong in every particular, leading to the disastrous war with Iraq. Currently, the Agency is unable to penetrate terrorist groups. Nearly every top-level agent employed over the course of 60 years

has been a volunteer, a “walk-in,” not the product of intensive efforts to find and recruit spies.

Since the CIA works for the president, political pressure regularly trumps honest analysis. Hundreds of incomprehensible covert actions have been launched because the White House said “do something.” The overthrow of Mohammed Mossadeq in Iran in 1953 and the manipulation of elections in countries like Italy through the 1980s to keep the Communists out only encouraged corruption and inhibited positive political development. Many other operations, particularly in Latin America, did little more than install military dictators, empower leftist revolutionaries, and blacken the name of the United States.

In the wake of 9/11, the Agency failed to redeem itself. Director George Tenet grandiloquently declared war on Osama bin Laden then inexplicably failed to allocate resources to deal with the emerging terrorist threat or create career incentives to attract top officers to work in counterterrorism. He was

General’s report released in August 2007 recommended disciplinary action against Tenet and three of his top aides over failure to perform adequately in the lead-up to 9/11. But the recommendation was ignored by Porter Goss and Michael Hayden, the two directors who succeeded Tenet.

Examples of other mistakes abound: An officer operating in the Middle East once betrayed an entire network of agents when he tried to pass through an airport metal detector with their passports carelessly stuffed into a pocket with a steel pen. Officers in Europe in the early 1990s sent identical letters from the same mailbox on the same day to every agent in Iran, leading to the roll-up of every Agency source in that country. The agents paid with their lives; the officers involved were not punished. One became the chief of the Near East Division.

The Agency’s culture is increasingly defined by a kind of insularity, along with an unwillingness to accept criticism and a belief in its own exceptionalism. CIA

THE AGENCY’S CULTURE IS INCREASINGLY DEFINED BY A KIND OF **INSULARITY**, ALONG WITH AN **UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT CRITICISM** AND A BELIEF IN ITS **OWN EXCEPTIONALISM**.

unable to recruit Arab or Asian Americans who speak the languages and understand the cultures where terrorists germinate because the Agency’s draconian standards prevented them from getting security clearances. A consummate team player and bureaucrat who always sought to please, Tenet capped his career by slanting intelligence to support the White House’s plan for war against Iraq, famously declaring the case for WMD a “slam dunk.”

Yet the CIA always circles the wagons to protect its own. An Agency Inspector

analysts have been rightly rebuked for their inability to find and use open-source information. They give greater weight to reports from spies even when the information being provided is wrong. And the Agency’s obsessive secretiveness also goes beyond any rational need to protect sensitive material. It refuses even to acknowledge information already in the public record, including the location of its principal training center near Williamsburg, Virginia.

The most cult-like of the CIA’s divisions is its spy network—designated the

National Clandestine Service since 2006 but generally referred to by Agency officers as the DO, an acronym of its former name, the deputy directorate for operations. The DO has its own rites of passage, its own language and expressions. Many clandestine officers believe they belong to an elite that is undertaking extraordinarily difficult and dangerous tasks—"God's work." But the James Bond conceit is largely a fiction as few CIA officers are ever in real danger. High internal cohesion derives less from shared peril than the moral ambiguities related to spying.

This strong group identity has led to an acceptance of extraordinary levels of mediocrity or even incompetence within the ranks. As the alcoholic and utterly inept Aldrich Ames learned, it is very hard to get hired but even harder to get fired. One officer who was recorded by a Cuban film crew nonchalantly unloading a dead drop in a Havana park not only went unpunished for his failure to operate securely, he was made chief of a large station in Europe. The dead dropped message from the agent, who was a double working for Cuban intelligence, was concealed, appropriately, in a plastic dog turd fabricated by the Office of Technical Services.

Senior officers, in denial over their own lack of language and cultural skills, frequently maintain that "an op is an op," implying that recruiting and running spies is the same everywhere—an obvious absurdity. The Agency's shamolic overseas assignment process means that officers often receive only minimal language training and are expected to learn the local idiom after arriving at a post, presumably through osmosis. Most fail to do so. Frequently chiefs of station cannot converse with the heads of the local intelligence services unless their counterparts happen to speak English. Officers targeting indigenous political parties or government officials often

cannot read a newspaper or speak the local language. Attempts in the 1980s to require language qualification as a *sine qua non* for overseas assignment foundered due the sheer immensity of the problem. In 1995, only three Agency officers could speak Arabic well enough to understand an Arab speaking colloquially. Seven years after 9/11, there are only five such officers.

As the Agency evolved into what one critic called "a global military policy," an officer corps that largely eschewed any thought of torture or secret prisons in the '80s and '90s now embraces these practices—and their tradecraft is so poor that they can't even keep their war crimes secret. The 26 CIA employees who abducted radical preacher Abu

position that he had held. He was, however, a skilled operator in the headquarters bureaucracy—which in some ways made him a welcome exception. Most Agency senior officers in the clandestine service are promoted because they are believed to be effective case officers, good at recruiting and running agents, not because they are able managers. The aggressive arrogance common in agent handlers makes them ill-suited superiors. As a result, most CIA chiefs of station are regarded by their subordinates as terrible bosses whose first priority is polishing their own reputations. By 2001, even though the terrorist threat had been growing for years, many overseas stations had become paranoid and operationally paralyzed. A well-known

THE JAMES BOND CONCEIT IS LARGELY A FICTION AS FEW CIA OFFICERS ARE EVER IN REAL DANGER. HIGH INTERNAL COHESION DERIVES LESS FROM SHARED PERIL THAN THE MORAL AMBIGUITIES RELATED TO SPYING.

Omar from a Milan street in 2003 used passports and cell phones in false names but called their families in Virginia and claimed frequent flyer miles at their hotels in their true names, enabling Italian investigators to identify nearly all of them. The major counterterrorist operation, costing millions of dollars and with a huge supporting cast of Italians and Americans, successfully "rendered" the hapless Egyptian cleric to Cairo. He was subsequently tortured into telling everything he knew, which was more or less nothing, leading to his release by the Egyptians.

A fish rots from its head. One recent director for operations was referred to derisively by a number of European intelligence services as the "Ex-Chief of Station Luxembourg" because he lacked operational experience and Luxembourg was the most senior overseas

chief of station in Rome was so insecure about his staff that he tasked a loyal officer to crawl through the halls to eavesdrop outside offices and monitor what was being said.

Another reason the wrong officers advance is that personnel policies tend to measure performance in statistical terms. It is, perhaps, a failure of the American imagination, or an adoption of a production-line mentality, that leads to the confusion of more with better. Nowhere is this truer than at the CIA. Field officers are evaluated by the number of recruitments, called "scalps," and raw intelligence reports produced during a standard two- or three-year tour. Quality is relatively unimportant since most officers move on before the hollowness of their achievements can be fully realized by their successors. As it is extremely difficult, even impossible,

to locate and recruit a terrorist, few are willing to make the effort when easier pickings can inflate the numbers. Some officers deliberately seek assignments—referred to as “recruiting tours”—in poor Third World countries where it is easy to run up the score.

Struggling to achieve within the sluggish and multilayered Agency bureaucracy, described by one critic as similar to that of the former Soviet Union, officers become more adept at working the system than collecting intelligence. In a candid moment, most retirees would admit that they never recruited an agent who actually had information vital to the United States and never produced an intelligence report that contained anything policymakers actually needed. It has been estimated that only 4 percent of finished intelligence reports originate from recruited spies, referred to as “humint.”

In the wake of 9/11, analysts realized that they must write more rather than better reports—and align themselves with the prevailing view of the White House—if they wanted to get promoted. Strategic analysis, which takes more time, requires more expertise, and does not tell the White House what is going to happen tomorrow, became a lost art. As Carl Ford, a retired senior analyst, put it, “As long as we rate intelligence more for its volume than its quality, we will continue to turn out the \$40 billion pile of crap that we have become famous for.” The policymakers often agree. President Richard Nixon frequently asked what the hell “those clowns” were doing over at Langley. President George H.W. Bush, a friend of the Agency and onetime director, referred to the CIA as “both ineffective and scared.”

Unsurprisingly, rampant operational corruption has led to personal corruption. The September 2008 conviction of the Agency’s third-ranking officer, Kyle “Dusty” Foggo—who pled guilty to wire

fraud after being charged with 30 separate crimes—was only the tip of the iceberg. Retired officers become contractors to take advantage of the system, while former senior personnel do even better, exploiting their international contacts to make money on a much larger scale. Several recent Clandestine Service retirees who were involved in Iraq have become partners in ventures marketing oil diverted from wells in Kirkuk and Mosul with the collusion of the Kurdish authorities. The oil is sold primarily on the black market in Eastern Europe.

Into this dysfunctional environment, President Obama has dispatched Leon Panetta—soft-spoken, judicious, wise to the ways of Washington. His lack of intelligence experience initially riled Senate Intelligence Committee chair Dianne Feinstein, who was pushing her fellow Californian, Rep. Jane Harmon. But he fielded the committee’s questions with aplomb, and the consensus among former officers is that Panetta is a good pick.

He was, in fact, the second choice. Obama had been leaning toward John Brennan, a company man and close adviser to George Tenet who was forced to withdraw from consideration amid accusations that he approved Bush-era interrogation and rendition practices.

Panetta comes with fresh eyes and a pragmatic streak. As Bill Clinton’s chief of staff, he imposed order on a slovenly West Wing. As a member of the Iraq Study Group, he saw firsthand the disastrous consequences of politicizing intelligence. A consummate insider, he carries enough weight to clear space for renovation.

High on Panetta’s to-do list should be the introduction of a requirement that entry-level hires have foreign language skills. If officers do not achieve proficiency in the language of their target country, their assignments should be

canceled. More officers should be sent overseas—under business rather than embassy cover—and they should be required to complete cultural and historical studies before going. These postings should be three years minimum to enable officers to understand the working environment and local players.

Those who undertake arduous assignments shouldn’t be penalized. Indeed, promotion should be recalibrated to gauge success relative to the difficulty of the job. An officer who works hard on terrorists but never recruits—or even meets—one should not be judged on the same scale as someone who goes to Africa and recruits a local chief of police. (In fact, there should be no reward for recruiting an African chief of police.) Moreover, senior-level assignments should no longer be plums for officers who have done their time and are just waiting to retire. And at the highest levels, officers with proven management ability should fill top posts—not necessarily people who have street skills.

These are not changes that Panetta can accomplish by himself. Bureaucracy is a sluggish beast. But he is positioned to alter CIA culture in two critical ways. He can serve as a buffer between the White House and the Agency, not a conduit for policymakers’ demands, and he can encourage risk-taking against terrorist and proliferation targets by protecting and rewarding his officers who are willing to accept the challenge. In his Feb. 5 confirmation hearing, Panetta promised to “turn the page to a new chapter in the Agency’s history.” We’ll soon see whether he has the vision, independence, and will to make good on that pledge and fix a CIA that is undeniably broken. ■

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Race to the Top

Antonio Villaraigosa's radical past

By Roger D. McGrath

WHEN I RETURNED to college after serving Uncle Sam, I discovered a new organization at UCLA called MEChA—Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán. The group, founded by Mexican-American students who preferred to call themselves Chicanos and Chicanas, proclaimed that its mission was to reclaim California and the rest of the Southwest—an area MEChA called Aztlán—from “the foreigner ‘gabacho’ who exploits our riches and destroys our culture. ... [W]e declare the independence of our mestizo nation. We are a bronze people with a bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are Aztlán.”

MEChA's motto made clear that it was all about race: *Por La Raza todo. Fuera de La Raza nada*—“For the Race everything. Outside the Race nothing.” I recall thinking at the time that no white group with similar aspirations would have been tolerated. MEChA's aim at UCLA was to gain control of the newly created Chicano Studies Center, radicalize it, and transform it into an independent department. This was clearly more about power and funding on campus than a lack of courses for Hispanics. The long-established departments of history, language, and literature already offered dozens of those. Since I was working on my doctorate in the history department at the time and knew several professors who taught Latin American classes, I was more than a casual observer of the battle.

One student quickly rose to leadership in the UCLA chapter of MEChA

after arriving on campus in 1972 from East Los Angeles Junior College under an affirmative-action program. His name was Tony Villar. Although small of stature and short on academic achievement, he was well served by his energy, confidence, big smile, outspoken manner, and Chicano “street cred.” He had grown up in East L.A., the son of a Mexican-American mother and a Mexican father. The alcoholic and abusive father left the family when Villar was 5 and had another son, whom he also named Antonio. Villar said that having a half brother with the same name made him feel he had been replaced.

At UCLA, Tony Villar was instrumental in the MEChA takeover of the Chicano Studies Center. “He was one of the guys that would go out there and start the slogans because he was the loudest one,” said Arturo Chavez, a fellow MEChA member. “He was one of the people who would make sure people were riled up.” According to reports in the *Daily Bruin* in 1974, Villar ran a campaign to force the Center to include a radical Chicano community group in an advisory role. Villar also led a protest that resulted in extensive vandalism.

Villar's target was the center's director, Rudolfo Alvarez, whom Villar and fellow MEChA member Raoul Garcia considered too moderate. “Both Villar and Garcia,” said the *Daily Bruin*, attacked the Alvarez-directed CSC for working only with government-sponsored drug programs “instead of community organizations like the National Committee to Free Los Tres.” MEChA had formed the Free Los Tres commit-

tee to defend three members of the radical Chicano organization Casa Carnalismo who were convicted of assaulting a federal narcotics officer. Moreover, a Marxist-Leninist faction within the Free Los Tres committee wanted to make its parent organization, Casa Carnalismo, the “revolutionary vanguard” for the “liberation of the Mexican people.”

The protests succeeded in forcing Alvarez's resignation. I remember it clearly as just one more capitulation to campus radicals. Small numbers of leftist militants could easily intimidate the administration, especially if they claimed victim status and were black or brown. There were more than a thousand students with Spanish surnames on campus at the time—mostly Mexican-Americans—and probably not more than a hundred were members of MEChA. Nonetheless, MEChA got its way. Whenever conservative Mexican-American students dared speak, Villar and company shouted them down with chants of “Uncle Tomas.”

Villar left UCLA in 1975 without a degree but with a daughter born out of wedlock in 1974. He returned to campus first in 1977 to finish his undergraduate degree and then to give speeches. In 1978, he fathered another daughter out of wedlock with a second woman.

During the early 1980s, he enrolled at People's College of Law. Located in Los Angeles, the school is not accredited by either the American Bar Association or by the State Bar of California. PCL describes itself as a nonprofit, public-interest law school “created to address and balance inequities in our law and society” and “to

advocate people before property.” The school dedicates itself to fighting for “tenants’ rights” and against “discrimination, economic and political oppression.” PCL says it “is looking for students from groups who have been historically denied access to legal training and representation, such as working people, women, and minorities.” Neither a college degree nor the LSAT is required for admission.

Although PCL awarded Villar a juris doctor in 1985, he failed to pass the bar. After four attempts, he quit trying. No matter. He became a union organizer for United Teachers Los Angeles. In 1987, he married Corina Raigosa, a school teacher, and the next year combined his surname with hers to become Villaraigosa. He also discarded Tony for Antonio. The couple had a son in 1989 and a daughter four years later.

As Corina fought thyroid cancer in 1994, Villaraigosa decided to run for the California State Assembly. While campaigning, he began an affair with one of his aides and a close family friend, Martha Reyna. Her husband, Richard, was also a friend and a fundraiser for the campaign. Corina and Richard discovered the affair, and the day after Villaraigosa was elected to the Assembly, Corina filed for divorce. But she granted Antonio a reprieve two years later.

With the support of the Hispanic caucus in the state legislature, Villaraigosa became speaker of the Assembly in 1998. Term limits forced him out in 2000, and he made an unsuccessful run for mayor of Los Angeles in 2001. A year later, he was elected to the L.A. City Council from a mostly Mexican-American district immediately to the north and east of downtown Los Angeles.

In 2005, Villaraigosa again ran for mayor. This time, the changing demographics of the city made him the favorite. L.A.’s Hispanic population had grown to nearly 50 percent, while the non-Hispanic white population dropped

to 30 percent. Villaraigosa captured 58 percent of the vote, becoming Los Angeles’s first mayor of Mexican descent in more than 130 years.

During his campaign, the mainstream media mostly ignored Villaraigosa’s MEChA affiliation—and nearly everything else about him of a negative variety. It would be inconceivable for a white candidate’s membership in a racist organization, especially one that called for the dismantling of the United States, to be blithely dismissed as a youthful indiscretion. When asked by a couple of irreverent hosts on a local radio talk show if he still endorsed the goals of MEChA, Villaraigosa called the question inflammatory and refused to answer.

The media also rarely mentioned Villaraigosa’s multiple failures of the bar exam, his out-of-wedlock children, or his affair with Martha Reyna. Also mostly ignored were reports of Villaraigosa’s philandering with Telemundo’s Mirthala Salinas, which should have been of special interest to the media as Salinas was the reporter covering L.A.’s mayor. The affair went on for nearly a year and became an open secret. Eventually, the mainstream media began reporting what many in Los Angeles already knew. Corina again filed for a divorce and this time didn’t back off.

Villaraigosa has also been romantically linked to Korean immigrant and fashion designer Chung Hee Kim, known professionally as Sabrina Kay. She has been his political ally and fundraiser since his days in the state legislature. During the fall of 2006, he took a small delegation of city officials and business leaders, including Sabrina Kay, on a trade mission to the Orient. A Korean newspaper, *Sunday Journal*, noted that although Villaraigosa failed to meet with any of Korea’s principal businessmen, he spent plenty of time with Kay and modeled clothes for her fashion show. The same newspaper wondered

how Kay became a member of the Los Angeles Planning Commission.

As mayor, Villaraigosa seems to do little other than promote himself. His days are filled with photo ops, public-relations events, fundraising, and travel. He continually makes silly promises—planting a million trees was one—without considering operational or logistical support. With the city facing a financial crisis of immense proportions, he can suggest nothing but raising taxes. But he excels at raising money for himself and can work a room with the best of them, glad-handing, smiling ebulliently. He is manicured from head to toe and rivals former Speaker of the Assembly Willie Brown for sartorial splendor. When it’s all about Antonio Villaraigosa, he’s a dynamo. During a typical month, he will attend a dozen or more fundraisers for himself, accounting for about a fifth of his working hours.

Another third of his time is spent out of town, traveling overseas to such countries as Japan, Korea, China, Israel, and Britain and to such American cities as Las Vegas, San Antonio, Honolulu, Chicago, Miami, Washington, D.C., and New York. His travel increased in 2008 when he became Hillary Clinton’s point man in her effort to capture the Latino vote in Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, and especially Texas. Everywhere he goes, he’s accompanied by a large entourage and security detail.

Los Angeles may be approaching insolvency, but Mayor Villaraigosa’s war chest is full. March’s mayoral primary fields no serious challenger. The race is almost incidental: L.A. is simply a staging area for what Villaraigosa really wants—the governorship of California in 2010. And beyond that ... Aztlán? It sounds improbable, but so is the notion that this noisy student radical would be the top contender to lead the Golden State. ■

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Free Trade in Free Fall

As we go to press, the Senate has just passed the revised \$838 billion stimulus package by a vote of 61-37. It retains a weakened form of the “Buy American”

provisions that elicited protests from the White House and Republicans in Congress.

Of all the elements that President Obama could have criticized, he singled out the requirement that the government purchase domestically produced iron and steel for its infrastructure projects—one of the few instances in which the strongest opponents of the package agreed with the new administration. But given the president’s criticism, the provisions may yet be stripped out of the final conference bill. Amid all the frivolous accusations of petty partisanship dominating the stimulus bill debate, the bipartisan consensus on free trade has retained a depressingly strong hold.

Objections to the provisions were typical free-trader boilerplate: they are protectionist and will trigger a retaliatory trade war. “We can’t send a protectionist message,” President Obama said, neglecting to mention that these provisions would not erect a single barrier to trade. In fact, even before the Senate modified the legislation, the “Buy American” provisions were entirely legal under existing trade agreements, and they are a fairly modest, almost symbolic gesture given the relatively small amount of money committed to infrastructure in the bill. The slightest privileging of American industry—even when it is a matter of spending taxpayers dollars to build projects in this country—is anathema to globalists in both parties.

But this time they have badly misjudged the national mood. If they per-

suade the president to have these provisions stripped from the bill, they could bring on a backlash.

Before the full onset of the current crisis, the public had already begun to sour on globalization, considering its costs too great. A January 2008 *Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll found 58 percent of Americans hostile to globalization “because it has subjected American companies and employees to unfair competition and cheap labor.” According to a May 2008 Pew survey, by a margin of 48 to 35 percent, Americans judged free-trade agreements to be bad for the United States—a 30-point swing from responses to the same question in 1990. These sentiments can only have grown stronger as the financial crisis has deepened. But free-trade advocates seem not to realize that by rejecting even these minimal “Buy American” provisions they are stoking a powerful anti-globalization fire that could quickly get out of control.

After bearing the costs of enormous imbalances in our trade and immigration policies for the last 20 years, the middle of a deep recession is probably not the best time to rediscover the importance of supporting domestic manufacturing and labor. But it is preferable to the alternative. In recent decades, rather than paying higher prices and investing in American industry, we have structured our economy around consumption financed by debt and facilitated by a flood of cheap imports. This has left us with even fewer

means of weathering the current economic storm and has made us more vulnerable to the bursting of the bubbles fashioned by our central bankers. Small, incremental initiatives are a start toward regaining some measure of independence and fixing the bad habits of the last 30 years.

Having lured Americans into deep dependence on imported goods and cheap credit to fuel the unsustainable growth of recent decades, free traders insist that we must keep doing the things that put us in our current predicament. Much of the prosperity of globalization was illusory, and we are now seeing the full economic cost of the policies pursued in its name. What we are only beginning to grasp is the cultural and political price to be paid for living to excess and perpetually deferring responsibility.

Patrick Deneen, an associate government professor at Georgetown University, recently posed a question that goes to the heart of the matter: “What if economic and political policies that promote consumption over good, hard work induce very bad habits that in turn lead to very bad economic outcomes?” Many conservative critiques of a consumption-based economy tend to focus on the moral and environmental costs this way of life imposes. What needs to be emphasized more, Deneen argues, is the unsustainability of that way of life because of the dangerous erosion of restraint and the glorification of risk-taking at its center.

But most Republicans remain wedded to free-trade ideology. This not only drives a wedge between them and their natural, socially conservative constituents, it is increasingly at odds with any understanding of the good life. ■

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*The Wrestler*]

On the Ropes

By Steve Sailer

"THE WRESTLER" is a slow-paced, predictable, but highly effective drama about a lonely former pro-wrestling star trying to hang on a little longer in the dim spotlight of minor league matches in New Jersey VFW halls and elementary-school gymnasiums. The warm-hearted screenplay by Robert D. Siegel exhibits the mastery of clichés that you'd expect from a former editor of *The Onion*, but plays them for pathos rather than irony.

"The Wrestler" depends utterly upon the painful authenticity of fiftysomething Mickey Rourke's performance as a nice guy whose every good intention is undermined by excess-testosterone syndrome. Rourke is so mesmerizing that you'll make up your own little list of current stars who could use two decades in career limbo.

Yet what about the almost equally improbable résumé of Rourke's 44-year-old co-star Marisa Tomei? Her courtroom scene in 1992's "My Cousin Vinny" as unemployed beautician Mona Lisa Vito, who testifies as an expert witness on the rear suspension of a 1964 Buick Skylark, was one of the unexpected triumphs in movie history. Tomei rightly beat out Vanessa Redgrave for the Best Supporting Actress Oscar, only to be dogged by a ridiculous rumor campaign claiming that a senile Jack Palance had announced the wrong name onstage.

A rather dreary career ensued. Due to the decline in the number of female screenwriters after 1960 (husband-wife writing teams have been replaced by brother acts), there are now far more fine actresses than fine roles for them. Entering her mid-40s, Tomei started taking her clothes off on-camera, beginning with the otherwise forgettable "Before the Devil Knows You're Dead." Career momentum restored, Tomei has now been nominated for an Oscar for her role in "The Wrestler" as a stripper with a heart of gold. While Tomei's character is trying to get out of stripping, Rourke's is striving to stay in wrestling.

Hollywood's Golden Age leading men tended to be disproportionately Irish-American, such as Jimmy Cagney, Spencer Tracy, and John Wayne. They were amiable tough guys from a concussion-centric culture who could throw—and take—a punch.

For a half decade after his stunning cameo as a professional arsonist in 1981's "Body Heat," Rourke looked to be their worthiest successor. The languid and cocky Rourke was the most magnetic star to emerge in the 1980s. The movie industry offered him the best and biggest parts—such as Eddie Murphy's eventual role in "Beverly Hills Cop," Tom Cruise's in "Rain Man," Kevin Costner's in "The Untouchables," and John Travolta's in "Pulp Fiction"—all of which he rejected.

At first, Rourke's determination to play sleazeballs rather than likable heroes was admired as a brave, even brilliant artistic strategy. He was praised for his Method acting dedication that required him to stop bathing to play a Charles Bukowski-like drunken poet in 1987's "Barfly."

But when he didn't resume shampooing after shooting wrapped, suspicion

grew that Rourke, who had racked up a 20-7 record as an amateur boxer in his teens, wasn't quite right in the head. He proved it by becoming a professional boxer in the 1990s, winning six of eight bouts before his neurologist convinced him that he soon wouldn't be able to count his winnings. His face needed at least four operations to repair the damage, including taking cartilage from behind his ear to rebuild his nose. (Combined with the muscle-building drugs he used to prepare for this new role—"When I'm a wrestler, I behave like a wrestler"—he looks only quasi-human in his comeback.)

In most artistic endeavors, a bit of madness is accepted, even encouraged. The stars of big-budget movies, however, have to be approved by the firms that provide "business interruption" insurance. When producers are spending up to a million dollars per day, their insurance companies have to be sure that the main man will show up.

Nor was Rourke terribly suited for character roles, since he just might pull himself together long enough to show up the film's stars as lightweights. Still, he kept working in dozens of trashy movies, while spending countless hours off set with his therapist and priest, with impressive results.

Casting Rourke rather than the original choice of Nicholas Cage limited fundraising for "The Wrestler" to \$7 million. Director Darren Aronofsky shot the film to look even cheaper. In contemporary America's paradoxical status system of tastes, that low-rent look has so far restricted the release of this genuine crowd-pleaser to upscale theaters. ■

Rated R for violence, sexuality/nudity, language, and some drug use.

BOOKS

[*Last Rites*, John Lukacs, Yale University Press, 208 pages]

Sketches From a Life

By Patrick Allitt

JOHN LUKACS HAS WRITTEN more than 30 books and recognizes that now, at the age of 85, the end must be near. Not many authors would have the nerve to use the title *Last Rites*, which might almost be taken as an invitation to the Grim Reaper, but Lukacs has never shied away from frank talk. An historian, he reminds readers that historians' memoirs are nearly always bad and boring. *Last Rites* is neither bad nor boring, but unfortunately it cannot rival his scintillating *Confessions of an Original Sinner* (1990), to which it acts as a kind of long appendix.

For most of his working life, Lukacs taught at Chestnut Hill, a Catholic college in Philadelphia, never had graduate students, and so never passed along his methods to other historians through formal training. His relationship with professional university historians has not been easy, and he memorably describes them as men of "pettiness and shortsightedness" whose faces are covered in "gray ice." He has always denied that history is a science and always denied that historians should strive for objectivity. Advances in 20th-century physics led Werner Heisenberg to realize that scientific certainty was an illusion, says Lukacs, and that to undertake an experiment is to influence its outcome. In the same way, history is participatory, engaging historians and changing them in the process. He draws a sharp distinction between accuracy, which is necessary but insufficient, and understanding, in which knowledge becomes part of individual readers even as it changes them. He also points out

that in history, unlike science, effects can sometimes precede causes: "for instance the fear (or anticipation) that something may or may not happen may cause it to happen (whence a view of 'a future' may cause 'a present')." In practice these ideas have led Lukacs to reconstruct the past with an emotional intensity few of his academic brethren can match. He specializes in getting inside his subjects' heads and looking at the world through their eyes. At its best, this method works superbly. Among his lasting achievements are three books about Winston Churchill in 1940, each one of which ratchets up the level of scrutiny, detail, and sympathetic identification to a higher degree than its predecessor. Readers almost become Churchill as they progress. In *The Duel* (1991) Lukacs dramatizes the confrontation between Hitler and Churchill in the early summer of 1940, during and just after the conquest of France and in the first stages of the Battle of Britain. Next, *Five Days in London: May 1940* (1999) zooms in on the struggle between Churchill and Lord Halifax, his rival for the prime ministership in the first few days after Neville Chamberlain's resignation. Finally, *Blood, Toil, Tears and*

know the ideas to enjoy his books. They speak for themselves and powerfully evoke a lost world, especially that of the early and mid-20th century in Europe. My own favorites are *The Last European War: September 1939-December 1941* (1978) and *Budapest 1900* (1988) into whose hundreds of pages it is possible to dive for days at a time, resurfacing with little gems of insight: that before Pearl Harbor many of the Luftwaffe pilots had romantic ideas about America, loved Walt Disney, and painted Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse on their Messerschmitts, or that the British never realized how much the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe admired and sought to emulate them, thereby missing the opportunity to exploit this widespread Anglophilia.

Lukacs, in addition to his historical writing, has had a love-hate relationship with the conservative movement over the last six decades. Conservatism has never meant to him a celebration of free-market economics, and he has always been immune to populism. He cherishes civilization, stability, Catholic tradition, and what he calls "bourgeois virtues." He never hesitates to condemn the greed, vulgarity, and raw grasping for power of

HE DRAWS A SHARP DISTINCTION BETWEEN **ACCURACY**, WHICH IS NECESSARY BUT INSUFFICIENT, AND **UNDERSTANDING**, IN WHICH **KNOWLEDGE BECOMES PART OF INDIVIDUAL READERS** EVEN AS IT CHANGES THEM.

Sweat (2008) is a book-length account of Churchill's first major speech as prime minister, in which he served notice to the British people, and his political rivals, that they would no longer negotiate with the Nazis and would never surrender. The reader comes away from these three books full of admiration for their central character and fully sharing his view that Hitler, not Stalin, was the greatest threat to civilization in the 20th century.

Lukacs has always been annoyed at academic historians' neglect of his theoretical ideas, but you do not need to

parts of the American Right. "The conservatives' propagation of American power throughout the world," he writes, and "their thoughtless belief in the endless benefits of technology, amounts to a denial of every conservative view of human nature and of its limits."

Lukacs, like Alexis de Tocqueville, whom he admires, recognizes the benefits of human equality and political democracy but never loses sight of the dangers that go with these ideals. He regrets the disappearance of self-identified gentlemen and ladies, deplores the cult of celebrity, and argues that demo-

cratic politicians' pursuit of popularity can lead to catastrophic errors such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

He thinks both sides of American politics have been degraded in recent decades. On the Right, Republicans and conservatives "proclaim their opposition to Big Government" but favor massive military forces, "as if 'defense' were not part of 'government'." When President Bush traveled abroad he was accompanied by more than a thousand people, "dwarfing what we know of the retinue of Genghis Khan or of the court of Louis XIV."

When the Democrats criticize the Iraq War, meanwhile, they concentrate on casualties among the Americans, neglecting "the perhaps one hundred thousand deaths of Iraqi people, their monstrous sufferings largely caused by the American invasion and presence in that unfortunate country," which stand in striking contrast to Americans' concern for vulnerable civilians in earlier wars. He has a special distaste for seeing presidents (Reagan, Clinton, and Bush II) giving military salutes while dressed in civilian clothes. "It is the gesture of someone who likes playing soldier. ... War is a serious matter; but like the boy-soldier salute, a sentimentalization of military matters is puerile."

The key to Lukacs's life and work is his origins in Hungary. He fled from the rubble of Budapest in 1945, aged 22, and made his way to America. Far from playing the role of keeper of the Hungarian exiles' flame, Lukacs was determined to become a master of the English language and to become an American. He succeeded admirably in both ambitions. In *Last Rites*, he treats the end of the Cold War as a delightful reprieve for Hungary but adds that he was in his mid-60s by then and had no wish to return permanently. His achievements in America, and his friendship with other Hungarian émigrés, have nevertheless made him a VIP in his homeland, and he has enjoyed the royal treatment, and several public awards, on his many visits since 1990. He even persuaded the post-Communist govern-

ment to name a square in Budapest after Winston Churchill, and was present, side-by-side with Churchill's daughter, at the unveiling of the nameplate. He regrets the poisonous rancor of the new Hungary's politicians, however, condemning them even more sharply than their American counterparts.

Last Rites, like *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, is primed with sharp insights and observations, but occasionally it misfires. Lukacs had the misfortune to be widowed twice, and the least successful part of this book is a chapter about his three wives. Has there ever been a spouse of anyone, anywhere, who would have enjoyed being compared with the writer's other two spouses in the space of 30 pages? Surely even the selfless helpmeets of Brigham Young would have murmured a protest. Lukacs's literary dexterity deserts him as he tries to eulogize each woman in turn. The whole point about private life is its privacy, which means that it ought not to become part of the public record. There are no embarrassingly intimate details here but neither is there enough substance to make each of the three women emerge as a distinct personality. He tries to give shape to his sketches by including witty remarks the wives made, but they don't sound humorous if you don't know enough of the context. You can almost see Lukacs telling himself: "Having written so extensively about so many things far and near, I ought to include a passage about the women who meant more to me than everything else put together." Whatever the merits of the idea, in practice he can't pull it off.

Second caveat: Lukacs throughout the book makes assertions, then in his footnotes quotes passages from his diary ("D.") to support them. The intention, I suppose, is to trace recurring trains of thought, but the inadvertent effect is bombastic, as though he believes that just one statement of his insights is not enough. The diary is often his only support for intriguing but unverifiable insights. At one point in the text, for example, he writes: "We have now lived not only in the twilight but beyond the end of an entire great

historical epoch ... the great European and bourgeois age..." You look expectantly to the footnote below for some kind of support for the idea but discover that it merely reads: "D. 9 May 2002. Most Americans have no sense or vision that the entire so-called Modern Age is over. Europeans uneasily sense this but have no longer any vigor to resist it."

Never mind: the good easily outweighs the bad in this as in all of Lukacs's books. As it ends, he regrets being so old, that his "appetite for life has been declining," and admits to fear of sudden death. On the other hand, he does not find his gratitude toward the past weakening, and he urges readers to share his love of history, which might make them melancholy but will intensify their love of life. Even gray-ice-faced historians like me can agree to that. ■

Patrick Allitt is professor of history at Emory University. His latest work, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History*, will be published in May by Yale University Press.

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[*The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century*, G. John Ikenberry, Thomas J. Knock, Anne-Marie Slaughter, Tony Smith, Princeton University Press, 157 pages]

[*What the World Should Be: Woodrow Wilson and the Crafting of a Faith-Based Foreign Policy*, Malcolm D. Magee, Baylor University Press, 2008, 189 pages]

Wilsonian Slaughter

By Richard M. Gamble

WOODROW WILSON'S transformation of American domestic and foreign policy casts a long shadow over the United States. Between 1913 and 1921, he reinvented the old Democratic Party into an agent of unlimited government. In the name of the people, he created the regulatory and administrative machinery at the heart of America's version of social democracy. He considered the Framers' system of separation of powers and checks and balances an outmoded contraption; appropriate to the Newtonian 18th century but hardly suited to the Darwinian world of organic development and "living" constitutions. Likewise, he ventured to replace balance-of-power diplomacy in the wake of World War I with an international "concert of power" designed to end war for all time, foster national self-determination, and promote global prosperity and social justice.

As the centennial of the First World War and of Wilson's presidency approaches, it is worth taking stock of the Wilsonian project. When we speak of Wilsonianism, we typically mean a particular orientation in foreign affairs—a faith in America's capacity and moral mandate to remake the world. Wilson famously promised to "make the world safe for democracy," and whatever those

words may have meant in 1917, his heirs today among Democrats and Republicans believe that American goodwill, expertise, and military might can make the world more democratic and therefore automatically more cooperative, prosperous, just, and safe.

Two recent books raise urgent questions about whether this understanding of America's role in history and world affairs can or ought to serve as a model for current policy. One casts its eye directly on the new Obama administration, the other delves into the theology underlying and animating Wilson's global agenda.

The Crisis of American Foreign Policy features essays by Princeton's John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, the historian and Wilson specialist Thomas J. Knock, and political scientist Tony Smith. This short book warrants close attention by anyone concerned about Obama's foreign policy and the meaning of his Inaugural Address. In 2006, Ikenberry and Slaughter co-directed the bipartisan Princeton Project on National Security. And Slaughter, until last month the dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton, recently became Hillary Clinton's choice to head the State Department's Office of Policy Planning. What until a few days ago had been the musings of Ivy League academics are now the policy proposals of an administration insider. Slaughter gets the last word in this book and offers nothing less than a blueprint for 21st-century Wilsonianism.

The "crisis" of the book's title refers to the state of American foreign policy after the Bush presidency. The authors agree that America has lost or severely damaged its credibility in the world thanks to Bush, but they disagree about the cause. Apart from Tony Smith, all the contributors distance Bush's "debacle" in Iraq as far as possible from their idea of Wilsonianism. They reject any suggestion that Bush and his advisers deserve to be considered true heirs of liberal internationalism. Indeed, they blame Bush for undermining the authority of international

organizations, the keystone of historic Wilsonianism. Knock and Slaughter argue that, at its core, Wilsonianism is not about exporting democracy, rather it seeks to foster multilateral institutions to resolve conflicts and prevent war.

By contrast, Smith, drawing largely on his 2007 book, *A Pact With the Devil*, ranks the spread of liberal democracy as first among Wilson's objectives. He rejects his fellow contributors' claim that multilateralism predominated the president's thought. But his real point of contention concerns paternity claims for the Bush Doctrine. Smith connects the "neoliberals" (a label Slaughter dismisses as a misleading "neologism") to the neoconservatives within the Bush administration and traces the Bush Doctrine directly back to Wilson's quest for open markets and global democracy. He argues that the only substantive difference between Left and Right camps in foreign-policy matters is their preference either for unilateral or multilateral action. He fears that both sides are "wedded to a self-perpetuating and self-defeating framework for action more dangerous than any other initiative ever undertaken in the history of American foreign policy."

Smith's evidence for the Left's long love affair with military interventionism in the name of humanitarian causes serves as a reminder that President Obama endeavors to remove troops from Iraq not to bring them home but to deploy them elsewhere. "Winning the war" in Afghanistan may well be followed by deployments in Darfur. Obama himself, writing in *Foreign Affairs* in the summer of 2007, spoke grandly of America's "mission" and "historic purpose" and promised to build a system of "common security" and to "export opportunity" in the form of "access to education and health care, trade and investment" and "steady support for political reformers" and democracy in other nations. If his campaign promises will be matched by deeds, he leaves no doubt as to his global agenda.

Obama's call to increase the size of the Army and Marines, strengthen NATO,

reform the UN, and build a new cooperative community of democracies echoes every point made here by Slaughter. Given her move to the State Department, her policy proposals demand careful attention. She seems to write with her fellow true believers in mind, those who already know that Wilson's domestic and foreign policies are right for America and the world. She might protest that exporting democracy has never been at the heart of true Wilsonianism, but she says flatly that the "United States can and should stand for democracy around the world" by encouraging the growth of the "political, economic, and social institutions necessary to support liberal democracy on a country by country basis..." During World War I, Wilson sought to replace balance-of-power diplomacy with a "concert of power." Slaughter, restating the Princeton Project's recommendations, calls for a "common counsel" and for the creation of a new "Concert of Democracies" to take action when the UN fails.

Most strikingly, Slaughter seeks to replace the traditional notion of sovereignty as a nation's control over its own security and destiny with a new "sovereignty of responsibility." That responsibility includes a duty to ensure the rule of law and end humanitarian crises within erring nations. President Obama spoke in his Inaugural Address of a "new era of responsibility" and warned leaders "who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent" that they "are on the wrong side of history." Obama may not have drawn these ideas directly from the Princeton Project and Slaughter, but he used the same language and logic. The new president and his director of policy planning at the State Department believe that this standard of responsibility will bring greater security to the world. By striving to reorder the "political and economic microfoundations of individual societies," Slaughter writes, America can "make the world safe for democracy," even if that project requires the U.S. to compel another nation "to protect its own citizens." Slaughter's formulation of

liberal internationalism goes so far that it can properly be called "deep Wilsonianism." The United States has never seen a foreign-policy agenda of this magnitude and potential cost in American lives and wealth.

Ikenberry, Knock, and Slaughter insist on a particular definition of Wilsonianism. Clearly a great deal hinges on getting that definition right. Ikenberry draws mostly from Wilson's Fourteen Points, announced to the world in January 1918. Global order and peace had to be based on democratic regimes that respected the rule of law and government by consent; international free trade; the civilizing influence of international law; a "community of power" acting through such agencies as the League of Nations; a faith that a "new order" would end antiquated systems and ways of thinking; and the United States' unique position and responsibility to help change the world.

This dream of a world transformed looks radically different, though, if we impose a different template. Wilsonianism, not as imagined but as experienced in the 20th century, meant something more ominous than what most of the contributors to *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy* would have us believe. An alternative set of characteristics might temper the current enthusiasm for a revitalized progressive internationalism. Wilson left a legacy of paternal, interventionist statism built on a centralized bureaucracy; faith in administrative, managerial solutions to what appear to less enlightened people to be intractable problems of the human condition; a gnostic longing for a universal and permanent end to war, poverty, and injustice; a self-righteous consciousness of America's mission to end the "old order" and bring in the new; a tendency to simplify world history into "reactionary" and "progressive" forces; and what sociologist Robert Nisbet called "moralization of foreign policy," leading to the unprecedented size and use of America's military.

In foreign affairs, it is possible that this Wilsonianism gets the prize as the most destabilizing force in the 20th cen-

tury. Historian John Lukacs once argued that the principles of "national self-determination" have reshaped the world more profoundly than the principles of "proletarian revolution." Wilson, not Lenin, "turned out to be the real revolutionary," he wrote. In both domestic and foreign policy, perhaps the most disturbing legacy of Wilson and the progressives has been the widespread loss of the fear of power. Even conservatives, especially if they are young, seem to forget that the fear of power once animated our constitutional Republic and helped restrain U.S. foreign policy.

Wilson concentrated tremendous power in the hands of the executive, making FDR and Lyndon Johnson possible, and Democratic and Republican presidents alike still imagine doing great good in the world with that power. There is more than a little truth in Ikenberry's claim that "we are all Wilsonians now."

While no one with any knowledge of history would imagine that it is possible to return to a "pre-Wilsonian" realism, conservatives ought to think seriously about how to build a post-Wilsonian foreign policy. George W. Bush missed an opportunity after Sept. 11, 2001, to regroup American policy on something other than ideology and abstraction. Faced with such tangible threats to their lives and property, ordinary Americans might have been ready to hear justifications for military action based once again on national interests and safety. Instead, the president leaped into the rarified world of global democracy and ideological crusading.

Yet taking ideology out of foreign policy and dethroning Woodrow Wilson will mean challenging principles that lie deeper than most historians and policy analysts would expect, namely, Wilson's theology. Historian Malcolm Magee's *What the World Should Be* provides a way to begin reckoning with Wilson's Christianity and its impact on his foreign policy. Magee argues that religion—more specifically, Presbyterianism—provides the key to Wilson's way of thinking and his efforts to reconstruct

the world. He rightly notes that too few scholars have taken Wilson's faith seriously enough, some minimizing it as merely conventional evangelicalism, some dismissing it as a rhetorical cover for policies driven by more mundane motives, and others acknowledging how formative religion was but failing to connect it explicitly to his foreign policy.

Magee makes a strong case for the centrality of Wilson's theology to the development, implementation, and faltering of his foreign policy. He follows the evolution of Wilson's thought from his childhood to his presidency, uncovering discernable patterns and habits of mind. He uses Wilson's letters, books, speeches, conversations, and behavior to reconstruct the contours and workings of the man's mind, a supremely difficult challenge for any historian. Magee draws attention to the way Wilson divided doctrine from faith, his head from his heart. The pastor's son rejected orthodox interpretations of his denomination's historic standards but at the same time claimed to be orthodox in his faith. Character counted more than creed, virtue more than dogma. On the other hand, Wilson broke down the distinction between the sacred and the secular. He was no Augustinian. He spiritualized politics and politicized his faith, believing that America could be Christianized and the whole world reconstructed politically, militarily, and economically according to the divine plan. With these views, he combined a powerful faith in human progress guided by a superintending Providence and a conviction that order and coherence underlay all the seeming contradictions of life. Magee recognizes the influence of Hegel and Darwin but properly foregrounds Wilson's Christianity.

Magee gets Wilson largely right, but one further refinement of his analysis would have been helpful in connecting American Christianity and the "faith-based foreign policy" of the subtitle. It is not enough to say that Wilson was a Calvinist or a Presbyterian. Wilson, as Magee's evidence makes clear, was a particular kind of Calvinist and Presby-

terian. He adhered to a branch of Calvinism that tried to reorder every institution by bringing it under Christ's dominion. Magee refers to "the Presbyterian tradition," but it is doubtful there ever has been anything so unified in American history. Wilson owed his view of the church and the world not to confessional Presbyterianism but to the transformationist strand of evangelicalism that came to dominate mainstream Presbyterianism in the late 19th century. Wilson imbibed an activist faith that in many ways distorted historic Presbyterianism. He rejected creedal, confessional Presbyterianism. In order to understand his foreign policy, then, we must understand not his Presbyterian roots in general, but the fact that he emerged from a branch of Protestantism that had more in common with low-church, sentimental, meliorist evangelicalism than with historically Reformed Christianity. Magee fills in an important dimension of Wilson's thought and personality, but finding the precise faith on which Wilson based his foreign policy requires that the story of American Christianity be told a bit differently.

This story matters because culturally dominant, politically connected, activist evangelicalism unites Wilson, Bush, and Obama. Rather than simply seeking ideological kinship between Democrats and Republicans, or liberals and neo-conservatives, we ought also to look for theological kinship—or at least for the remnants of theology. Doing so makes clear why Obama aligned himself with Rick Warren and why, in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Slaughter favorably quotes Warren's claim that "the only thing big enough to solve the problems of spiritual emptiness, selfish leadership, poverty, disease, and ignorance is the network of millions of churches all around the world." The transformationists in church and state have a common cause. And this is not a recent development. Throughout American history, the purpose-driven church has worked hand in hand with the purpose-driven nation.

Any effort to build a post-Wilsonian

foreign policy will have to deal honestly with American evangelicalism's historic role in reorienting the church and the state toward social activism and global meliorism. Righteous interventionism appeals to our national vanity and piety. We have to face the fact that there is something deeply and authentically American about Wilsonianism. We cannot pretend that the transformationist impulse is something alien to our history and nature, or that it has been thrust upon us. Even Ronald Reagan frequently quoted Tom Paine's boast that "we have it in our power to begin the world over again." To some, an America without the impulse to do good seems like no America at all. And this makes realistic foreign policy a hard sell. Wilson labeled realism "selfish." He replaced it with a "service" ethic that continues to dominate the American temperament. Faced with these realities, conservatives will have to figure out how to rehabilitate the language of national interests, safety, and modesty.

In 1793, Alexander Hamilton began his defense of President Washington's neutrality proclamation by warning against "the treacherous phantoms of an ever craving and never to be satisfied spirit of innovation; a spirit, which seems to suggest to its votaries that the most natural and happy state of Society is a state of continual revolution and change—that the welfare of a nation is in exact ratio to the rapidity of the political vicissitudes, which it undergoes—to the frequency and violence of the tempests with which it is agitated." If even Hamilton, one of the prime architects of the energetic executive in foreign affairs, saw the dangers of "change we can believe in," how much harder ought today's conservatives work to curb the enthusiasm of international zealots and busybodies? ■

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[*The School on Heart's Content Road*, Carolyn Chute, *Atlantic Monthly Press*, 342 pages]

Breaking Up Is Hard to Do

By Kirkpatrick Sale

ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS has put the strangest and most misleading jacket on Carolyn Chute's new book. The cover is a pale blue rectangle, which frames a soft, pastel-colored, faux-folk painting of a teenage boy in holey jeans alongside a little girl in heart-shaped sunglasses who carries a doll. Behind them is a bucolic scene with cows and a farmhouse, smoke drifting from its chimney.

But the novel is nothing like that. It is set around 2000 in Egypt, Maine, the down-and-out backwoods area that Chute invented for her previous books, where poor people struggle in a world that they know is indifferent to their troubles. This story describes two sets of getting-by folks, a bunch of redneck target-shooting laborers and a rural commune of self-sufficient ageing hippies—both of whom get together to become a proto-militia that might one day get serious about resisting the system. Nothing pastel or bucolic about them.

The strange, gooey title is also misleading, since “school” really refers to a commune, which is actually called the Settlement, only one small part of which is a self-run school. And “Heart's Content Road” is another misnomer, since very few hearts have known content in their efforts to farm a not very benevolent land. I assume this is Chute's intentional irony, but it suggests a condescension that she doesn't really mean.

After all, Chute is not only a member of a real Second Maine Militia, which she helped found more than 10 years ago, but she is at heart very sympathetic to the wider militia movement—and to the secession that it inevitably aims toward. The militia in the book is, like her own group, a quirky combination of people from across the spectrum of

political beliefs—some for the Constitution as a protection of individual rights (such as to bear arms); others against it as “America's first NAFTA,” a tool of the “bankers octopus.” Both sides agree that they are being pushed around in their lives by “the other government, the one you never see ... an alien government,” a “New World Order.” The “grand accumulators” are way beyond their reach. They are, as one character puts it, “all these wonderfully pissed-off people.”

That is, for me, one of the great elements of this book. It underlines a truth in America about which none of those in the conventional political system or their media lapdogs seems aware. It is the allegiance between the so-called Left and Right, that growing anti-authoritarian coalition that, though given scant voice in the nation, is a strong and deep and passionate reality. It includes libertarians and anarchists, individualists and communitarians, homeschoolers and marijuana growers, gun lovers and wind lovers, anti-Federal-Iders and anti-Federal-fencers—a whole constituency of people fed up with government restrictions and harassments, at last giving voice to a protest long stifled.

Since I began the Middlebury Institute—“for the study of separatism, secession, and self-determination”—four years ago, I have seen expressions of this anti-authoritarian, anti-government dissent roll out across the country. An increasing number of people seem to be coming to the decision that it is only through separation from the American empire that they can achieve any measure of freedom and control over their lives. They mostly don't know how they are going to do this or how to create groups and unions and movements. But of the depth and sincerity of their dissatisfactions and disgruntlements, there is no doubt. And of their commitment to the creation of smaller-scale, truly democratic governments, there is ample evidence.

This remarkable book deals with the complexity and, let's face it, the messiness of this Left-Right impulse toward liberty. The alliance of the disparate in Chute's Maine begins with a few wary

meetings, followed by some joint target practices and visitations to nearby militia groups. Next comes a (non-military) march on the state capital to denounce the state government. The placards read, “CORPORATIONS OUT, WE THE PEOPLE IN” and “THE SOVERN [sic] RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN S--T ON!!!” and so on. The demonstrators make fun of the governor, who won't leave his office to face them, with shouts of “He's chicken!” and “The governor is a corporate slut,” the latter of which the teenagers particularly enjoy.

The march having been such a success, the militia—now the True Maine Militia, with its own badges and sign-up cards—decides to have a big gathering at the Settlement, ostensibly to celebrate the birthday of a 100-year-old resident but in fact to announce themselves to the world as a new movement, a militia to reckon with. They get publicity in the local paper, which is picked up by the AP and sent around nationally. On the big day, some 2,000 people descend on the Settlement, including several television cameras, photographers, and reporters, and of course the FBI and other unspecified spooks.

Gordon St. Onge, the leader of the Settlement, gives the key speech, a rambling peroration that is the high point of the event—and the book. It is at heart a populist rant that gathers together all of the militia's complaints:

Are you all trying to say you are tired of losing everything your homes your families your dignity your jobs your independence your life-sustaining skills your hoped-for power to govern as the American people? ... We waste time here talking about government treachery. But we cannot fix something that is not broken. The system izzz working as designed. It is FLOWERING. Tonight we too, begin a shadow government. We turn our backs on E-VILE. FORGET THEM!!!!!! ... Let's build our own cooperatives, local sane *agri-culture*, energy co-ops, trade co-ops ... stalwart citizens' militias and more.

Finally, as the crowd starts chanting "OUT! OUT! OUT!" over and over again, St. Onge leads on inexorably to a shouting finale for secession. He raises up a fist and roars, "GOD SAVE THE REPUBLIC—OF MAINE!" As if to underline exactly what that means, the FBI agent infiltrating the crowd muses, "Maine secede from America? Is this what the big puppy is suggesting so publicly?"

Now all of this does not in fact lead to any action toward secession, mostly because St. Onge gets badly drunk that night and has a wild sexual caper with the daughter of Rex York, the leader of the rednecks. The FBI catches them on film and shows it to York the next day. He faces down St. Onge in an explosive rage, beats and kicks him to a senseless pulp. Though St. Onge will eventually recover, the alliance that created the militia is over. Reality intrudes and the political dream is shattered.

No secession. Still, it is passing strange that most of the reviews of this book never mention that secession lies at the heart of the story. It is as if reviewers get fogged over by the pastel cover and think the main characters are the boy and girl in the pastoral scene, not the militia leaders expressing their discontent with the "New World Order" by seeking to get out from under it, with guns or not. Or perhaps members of the literary establishment just aren't ready to take secession seriously—or don't want to seem so.

Chute will probably take care of that. This is the first entry in what she has promised will be a "5-ology." She will revisit the people of Egypt, who are not likely to get any happier with the American empire as time goes on through 9/11, Iraq, the Katrina-ization of government, and the financial meltdown. Perhaps she will take the story on to actual secession. As Chute said to a recent gathering of the Third Secessionist Convention in New Hampshire, "breaking it up seems to be the only way." FORGET THEM!!! ■

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How Radio Wrecks the Right

Continued from page 7

saving Wilsonianism, social utopianism, and a cloth-eared, moon-booted Republican administration.

You might object that the Right didn't need talk radio to ruin it; it was quite capable of ruining itself. At sea for a uniting cause once the Soviet Union had fallen, buffaloes by master gamblers in Congress, outfoxed by Bill Clinton, then seduced by the vapid "compassionate conservatism" of Rove and Bush, the post-Cold War Right cheerfully dug its own grave. And there was some valiant resistance from conservative talk radio to Bush's crazier initiatives, like "comprehensive immigration reform" and the Medicare prescription-drug extravaganza.

But there was not much confrontation with other deep social and economic problems. The unholy marriage of social engineering and high finance that ended with our present ruin was left largely unanalyzed from reluctance to slight a Republican administration. Plenty of people saw what was coming. There was Ron Paul, for example: "Our present course ... is not sustainable. ... Our spendthrift ways are going to come to an end one way or another. Politicians won't even mention the issue, much less face up to it."

Neither will the GOP pep squad of conservative talk radio. And Ron Paul, you know, has a cousin whose best friend's daughter was once dog-walker for a member of the John Birch Society. So much for him!

Why engage an opponent when an epithet is in easy reach? Some are crude: rather than debating Jimmy Carter's views on Mideast peace, Michael Savage dismisses him as a "war criminal." Others are juvenile: Mark Levin blasts the *Washington Compost* and *New York Slimes*.

But for all the bullying bluster of conservative talk-show hosts, their essential attitude is one of apology and submis-

sion—the dreary old conservative cringe. Their underlying metaphysic is the same as the liberals': infinite human potential—Yes, we can!—if only we get society right. To the Left, getting society right involves shoveling us around like truckloads of concrete; to the Right, it means banging on about responsibility, God, and tax cuts while deficits balloon, Congress extrudes yet another social-engineering fiasco, and our armies guard the Fulda Gap. That human beings have limitations and that wise social policy ought to accept the fact—some problems insoluble, some Children Left Behind—is as unsayable on "Hannity" as it is on "All Things Considered."

I enjoy these radio bloviators (and their TV equivalents) and hope they can survive the coming assault from Left triumphalists. If conservatism is to have a future, though, it will need to listen to more than the looped tape of lowbrow talk radio. We could even tackle the matter of tone, bringing a sportsman's respect for his opponents to the debate.

I repeat: There is nothing wrong with lowbrow conservatism. Ideas must be marketed, and right-wing talk radio captures a big and useful market segment. However, if there is no thoughtful, rigorous presentation of conservative ideas, then conservatism by default becomes the raucous parochialism of Limbaugh, Savage, Hannity, and company. That loses us a market segment at least as useful, if perhaps not as big.

Conservatives have never had, and never should have, a problem with elitism. Why have we allowed canny barkers to run away with the Right? ■

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Guns or Bitter

The Super Bowl is a mere anticlimax to the February edition of the triannual Alexander Gun Show, held earlier that day in a volunteer firemen's hall a mile south of

the home of the late Barber Conable, the statesman who represented us in Congress for 20 years. Conable was a poetry-reciting antiquarian Iwo Jima vet who used to scour the show looking for Indian arrowheads to add to a collection he had begun in boyhood. Now *that* was an American.

The phrase "gun show" reduces Ellen Goodman readers to enuresis. Yet Alexander is basically a rural swap meet, as friendships are renewed and shotguns and ammo vended or traded of a Sunday morning. (The attendees have all gone to 7 o'clock mass, I'm sure.) Alexander Cockburn once wrote in the *Nation* that the populist Left ought to talk to the folks at gun shows; genuine democrats would come away refreshed by an encounter with working and rural citizens who are pro-Bill of Rights, anti-corporatist, and open to radical alternatives. Gene Debs and Huey Long and Norman Mailer would dig Alexander; a Democratic Party financed by Wall Street and choreographed by upper-middle-class hall monitors barely countenances these peoples' existence, though the lackbeards navigating the crowded aisles looking for a good cheap hunting rifle will make perfectly suitable corpses in whatever wars the think-tank commanders are drawing up in their tax-exempt covens.

I don't hunt, but my dad is an NRA member, and I grew up in a gun culture whose rate of violent crime is equal to the number of farmers in President Obama's cabinet. Contrary to the lurid imaginings of Beltway advocates of gun control—recently euphemized to "gun

safety"—in Alexander I saw nary Crip nor Blood nor sullen stringy-haired school sniper in a Slipknot T-shirt stocking his armory.

I stop to chat—chat: what an epicene verb in this context!—with Mark Shephard and his parents Barb and Ken at their customary table. Shep has been my friend since I was 5 years old. We laugh about a previous Gun Show/Super Bowl Sunday, when, gluttoned on chicken wings and Genny Cream Ale, we watched Scott Norwood's 47-yard field goal sail wide right in the 1991 game, which carved out a regional slough of despond later visited by the right-wing Calvin Klein model Vincent Gallo's film "Buffalo '66."

Shep and I spent every other fall day of 1972 visiting McGovern headquarters in Batavia and stuffing our pockets full of "Remember October 9" buttons. He never stopped collecting.

So at Shep's table I buy a button for Charles Goodell, the last U.S. senator from Upstate New York, who was appointed in 1968 to succeed assassinated Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. (Goodell's son, Roger, commissioner of the NFL, will hand out the Super Bowl trophy that night.)

Charles Goodell was a native of Jamestown, which also produced Roger Tory Peterson, 10,000 Maniacs, and Lucille Ball—not bad. In the humanely flighty tradition of his hometown, Goodell joined the quasi-pacifist Oregon senator Mark Hatfield as the loudest anti-Vietnam War voices in the Republican Party.

Alas, as an Upstater, Goodell was too

low-caste to ever win a statewide race. He proved to be a seatwarmer between carpetbaggers, as he lost a three-way race in 1970 to Connecticut's own James Buckley, who enjoyed birds quite as much as Roger Tory Peterson had but thought the Vietnam War just ducky.

Buckley fell in 1976 to an actual New Yorker, Pat Moynihan, for whom I toiled in magnificent ambivalence, but DPM gave way to yet another carpetbagger, the militaristic schoolmarm herself, who resigned the seat to exercise her diplomatic muscle.

To his great credit, accidental governor David Paterson, in replacing Hillary, passed over heirheadess Caroline Kennedy and son of a bastard Andrew Cuomo to choose Kirsten Gillibrand, a pretty blonde pro-gun, anti-bailout Hudson Valley Democrat who might make a decent ticketmate with Sen. James Webb or Jon Tester in 2016. If, that is, she is not Goodelled in 2010, for Rep. Carolyn McCarthy and other metroliberals driven by hick-hatred are threatening a primary. Senator Gillibrand's devotion to the Second Amendment will be sorely tested over the next two years—her colleague, the beyond egregious Chuck Schumer, has undertaken to educate her on the matter—but if she sticks to her guns, so to speak, the freemen and women of Alexander will have the odd sensation of Senate representation by someone who has not only been north of Yonkers, but has seen, up close, such rural exotica as a maple tree, a cider press, and a Methodist church.

I drive home from the gun show under the heatless midwinter sun singing along with the car radio to the touched Scott Walker's tristful "The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore." I don't know: maybe it will. ■

Featuring *The American Conservative* Contributing Editor and
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